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Decide and Defend

Regaining authority for controversial decisions through rendering account

Niels Karsten



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Decide and Defend

*Regaining authority for controversial
decisions through rendering account*

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St. Francis of Assisi once said: “Start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.” Most of the mayors and aldermen discussed in this thesis have done just that. They have managed to establish necessary, but highly controversial facilities for the homeless and have regained authority for their location decisions through explaining and justifying why they made these particular decisions. They have effectively shown directive leadership in a context that is particularly ill-disposed towards such a leadership style. Considering the controversiality of human service facility location decisions and the general mistrust of directive leadership, political-executives’ ability to regain authority was unexpected. And indeed, not all succeeded in doing so to the same extent. The aim of this thesis was to gain understanding of how making controversial decisions affects executives’ authority, more specifically, whether and how the rendering of account influences mayors and aldermen’s authority. My attempt to answer that question has been an unforgettable experience, a true journey of discovery in the realm of locational conflict.

Back in 2008, the project started out as a predominantly theoretical enterprise that focused on the relationship between the call for stronger leadership and the call for responsiveness. If it had not been for my supervisor, prof. Frank Hendriks, this thesis would have contained a multitude of intricate conceptual explorations of ‘leadership’, ‘accountability’, ‘authority’, ‘political support’, and the like. What I will remember most of Frank’s supervision is the ‘tja...’ he occasionally wrote in the margins of sections of my work that I mistakenly thought of as original, though-provoking, and relevant pieces. I have taken ‘tja...’ to be the Frankian euphemism for ‘I cannot say it is wrong’, or even ‘well thought out, well-written, but utterly irrelevant’. My sincere thanks, Frank, for reminding me to “really say something about really something”, as you like to phrase it. A second word of thanks goes out to my co-supervisor, dr. Linze Schaap, who has also played his part in ‘keeping things real’ by encouraging me to go out into the field, and at the same time keeping me sharp on non-substantiated claims, inconsistencies, and grammar mistakes in my own texts. Linze, this thesis has substantially benefited from our long-lasting and greatly appreciated cooperation.

I must admit that at first my supervisors had a hard time getting me to leave the relatively safe environment of the university, of books and theory, and to go out into the real world and speak to people. However, from then on, the practice of realising human service facilities and making controversial location decisions put a firm spell on me. As I found out, citizens, councillors, and political-executives play fascinating games that are riddled with true political disagreement, deliberate strategic behaviour, power play, lingering uncertainty, and genuine worries and emotions.

I would like to give a warm thank-you to my informants for allowing me to get what I realise can best be described as a brief glimpse of their day-to-day world. This is far more than the obligatory token of appreciation. Many have literally welcomed me behind closed doors, in their offices, meeting rooms, and living rooms, and have openly spoken about their experiences, thoughts, and feelings. Especially for the aldermen central in this study, whom I sometimes confronted with harsh remarks made by ‘anonymous others’ and critical observations of my own, being the object of the study was not always easy, and sometimes even very emotional. I deeply appreciate their continued engagement with my thesis and I have come to greatly respect political-executives’ efforts in realising human service facilities, though personally I am also critical of the way they sometimes communicate with citizens. Also, I have come to understand the commitment and devotion of neighbourhood residents to their causes and the sincerity of their opinions, worries, and emotions. Interviewing ‘*boze bewoners*’ (angry citizens) has been one of the great pleasures of writing this PhD thesis. At the same time, from my personal viewpoint, I would like to urge neighbourhood residents to critically reflect on the way they sometimes approach political-executives and the facilities’ clientele.

A warm word of thanks also goes out to my colleagues at the Tilburg School of Politics and Public Administration. To those with whom I have had the opportunity to reflect on my observations over the years (Casper Geurtz, Stefan Soeparman, Ted van de Wijdeven), to those with whom I have had the most refreshing talks on being a PhD student (Gerard Drosterij, Sara Stronks), and to those who have made the effort to comment on draft chapters (Bram Boluijt, Charlotte van Ooijen, Marcel Boogers, Thijs Jansen). Special thanks goes out to the *Resmaatjes*, the DISCO members and the self-proclaimed Knights of Democracy, the latter of which tend to only meet up in exotic places such as Lausanne, Switzerland. I look forward to continue working with many of you, as well as my other colleagues.

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Niels Karsten

Tilburg, April 2013

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1

Directive local leadership in a consensus context

Executive politicians, such as mayors and aldermen, frequently make decisions that are bound to cause social opposition and sometimes even outright resistance from citizens, interest groups, civil society organizations, or others. Making such controversial decisions, like implementing drastic measures to cut government expenditure or siting human service facilities for drug addicts, is an integral part of the role of public leaders in governing society. At the same time, it is often very difficult for executives to generate support for those kinds of decisions, especially when they are made in a directive, non-participative way. When political-executives make such decisions, their authority is readily challenged, especially when made in an institutional context that is characterised by interdependence, consultation, and consensus seeking.

There is an inherent tension between leadership^{1,2} and democracy that puts pressure on political-executives, especially on those who make directive decisions, that is, non-participative, authoritative ones (Ruscio, 2008; Kane, Patapan & 't Hart, 2009; Hendriks & Karsten, forthcoming 2013). This tension, which is a blind spot in the literature on democratic leadership (Kane & Patapan, 2012, pp. 10-29), is the key subject of the current study, which seeks to understand how political-executives regain authority for controversial decisions through rendering account, that is, by explaining and justifying their decisions. The interaction between directive political-executive leaders and councillors and citizens is at the centre of this study. It is analysed from the perspective of accountability. The aim is to deepen the understanding of the meaning of contemporary political-executive leadership and of how public leadership accountability operates.

The current study focuses on local government. It takes local government as the focal point of the tensions between leadership and democracy since this is where calls for citizen participation in decision-making and responsiveness increasingly collide with decisive, independent decision-making by local leaders (John & Cole, 1999; Borraz & John, 2004; Haus, Heinelt & Stewart, 2005; Haus & Sweeting, 2006). It is at the local level especially that tensions emerge within the traditional representative democracy (Berg & Rao, 2005). The strengthening of local leadership and the simultaneous introduction of elements of participatory democracy pull local democracy away from traditional representative practices, but in different directions. The resulting tensions are most evident at the local level since this is where direct interaction between leaders and citizens is most frequent (John, 2009).

Making directive decisions in an ill-disposed democratic environment requires innovative political repertoires, the effectiveness of which is well worth studying. One aspect of these repertoires that is nowadays very significant is the way in which political-executive leaders render account for their decisions, that is, how decision-makers explain and justify their decisions to different audiences (Ruscio, 2008, pp. xi, 23). In this thesis the ‘accountability strategies’ of local political-executives are compared in an attempt to understand why some are more effective than others in regaining their authority, and in which context(s). The practice of accountability is studied from an as yet underexposed leader-centric perspective. This first chapter provides an introduction to the practical and the theoretical puzzles that motivate the study.

1.1 The dilemma of democratic leadership

The idea of democratic leadership is inherently paradoxical. “The theory of democracy does not treat leaders kindly” (Ruscio, 2008, p. ix). Whereas the concept of democracy rests on the idea of popular sovereignty, that is, self-government by an autonomous citizenry, and is based on an essentially egalitarian ethos, the concept of leadership necessarily encompasses hierarchy and hence, inequality. In a truly democratic society, the leader is the odd one out. Thus, at their theoretical extremes, political leadership and democracy are on rather bad terms with each other. This paradox is broadly recognised, both theoretically and empirically (see Kellerman & Webster, 2001; Ruscio, 2008; Kane & Patapan, 2012). Political leaders must walk a fine line between offering the necessary guidance and imposing authoritarian rule.

On the other hand, directiveness is a defining element of leadership, and especially of political-executive leadership: leadership is all about ‘leading’, about deciding between conflicting interests (MacGregor Burns, 1979, pp. 369-397; Bondel, 1987; Ruscio, 2008, p. xi). Amongst themselves, citizens very often, if not always, disagree about what should be done. They desire different states of affairs and incompatible measures to realise these. Thus, although a particular political decision may be in line with the opinion of the majority of the people, at the same time it always deviates from the opinion of others. A political decision is designed to be the endpoint of a conflict between people with differing opinions, which means that not all those involved get what they want. If no conflict exists, there is no need for a decision. Political decisions are therefore inherently controversial, argues Terpstra (2002, pp. 286-291). This is why “to be ruled is (...) inherently discomfiting” (Dunn, 1999, p. 342). “When you make decisions, you disappoint people. Choosing is losing. That is inherent to being an alderman” (Informant 4).

In that sense, all political decisions are essentially authoritative because they put one controversial state of affairs above the other. This creates a ‘dilemma of democratic leadership’ (Ruscio, 2008), which is aptly summarised by Kane, Patapan, and ‘t Hart (2009, p. 299): “The more democratic leaders lead from the front, the less democratic they appear; the more they act like good democrats, the less they seem like true leaders.” The leadership dilemma is thus an inherent one (Kane & Patapan, 2012), and one that creates difficulties for political-executives in attaining authority on a day-to-day basis in all democratic contexts.

Nevertheless, some decisions are more controversial than others. Some of political-executives’ decisions cause more social and political opposition than others. At the local government level this could include among other things: increasing local taxes, dismissing the result of a consultative referendum, cutting back on local welfare expenditure, refusing to honour a citizens’ initiative, opting for locally unwanted land uses, etc. The daily practice of political-executive leaders is riddled with such controversial decisions. These create serious challenges for local public leaders, especially those that opt for stronger, more directive leadership styles. When making such decisions their authority is readily challenged and that makes the leadership dilemma particularly acute.

1.2 Strengthening local political leadership

At the same time, local political-executive leadership in Western Europe is strengthening in the sense that local political-executives institutionally have become stronger leaders. Throughout Western Europe there have been attempts to strengthen local political leadership through institutional reform (Leach & Wilson, 2002; Borraz & John, 2004; Berg & Rao, 2005; Bäck, Heinelt & Magnier, 2006; Steyvers *et al.*, 2008; Wollman, 2008; Steyvers, Reynaert, Delwit & Pilet, 2009). The introduction of a (directly) elected mayor, which occurred in Austria, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom, is just one example. As a consequence of these developments, Europe witnesses the rise of the stronger local political-executive leader³.

The drivers behind this trend are twofold. First, the attempts to bolster leadership can be considered as a response to the rise of the network society, which is characterised by increasing interdependencies between public and private actors and a therewith growing complexity. Borraz and John (2004, p. 112) argue that “leadership is crucial to the functioning and success of local governance”, especially in a context of networks and partnerships. This claim is supported by other scholars as well. “In the fragmented contexts that characterise cities, political leadership becomes one of the principal – if not the principal – elements of urban governance”, argue Alonso and Mendieta (2010,

p. 188). John (in Goldsmith & Larsen, 2004, p. 122) notes: “Leadership is crucial to the new urban governance. The politics of decentralisation, networks, participation, partnership, bureaucratic reform, rapid policy change and central intervention need powerful but creative figures to give direction to local policy-making.”

Second, the strengthening of local leadership can be considered as a response to the alleged call for stronger local leadership among citizens (Borraz & John, 2004; Larsen, 2005, p. 208; Bäck *et al.*, 2006; Verheul & Schaap, 2010). Recent findings suggest that stronger public leadership increases citizen satisfaction (Greasley & John, 2011).

As a result what appears to be emerging in contemporary Western European local democracies is an ‘empowered individualised leadership’ (Steyvers *et al.*, 2008, p. 131; see also Borraz & John, 2004; Berg & Rao, 2005).

A stronger institutional position of political-executives, however, does not necessarily make stronger leaders since leadership is a behavioural concept that does not coincide with purely formal office holding (see Bondel, 1987, p. 13): it is a person’s behaviour that makes leadership. Empirical studies show that the effects of statutory positions on leadership style and performance are limited (e.g., Schaap, Daemen & Ringeling, 2009; Verheul & Schaap, 2010). The literature on stronger local leadership does not seem to fully acknowledge this distinction between ‘position’ and ‘behaviour’ (see Bondel, 1987, pp. 13-15), since stronger leadership is often equated with a more powerful institutional position (e.g., Steyvers *et al.*, 2009, p. 12; Greasley & John, 2011; see also Leach & Wilson, 2000; Copus, 2009, p. 39). By contrast, the current thesis focuses on the behavioural aspect of leadership, i.e. the leadership style, in particular the way of decision-making. It analyses how directive leadership styles fare in a democratic context.

Such leadership styles are on one end of a continuum with participative, collective, less directive ways of decision-making on one side, and directive, decisive, and less participative ways of decision-making on the other. In the literature on local political leadership strong, directive leadership, especially in its institutional sense, is often contrasted with ‘weak’ leadership (e.g., Steyvers *et al.*, 2008, p. 134; Steyvers *et al.*, 2009,

Table 1. A continuum of public leadership styles

	Directive leadership	<—————>	Participative leadership
<i>Leadership role</i>	Boss	<—————>	Facilitator/coach
<i>Decision-making style</i>	Authoritative	<—————>	Inclusive
<i>Type of decision-making</i>	Individual	<—————>	Collective
<i>Source of leadership</i>	Power over	<—————>	Power to
<i>Desired traits</i>	Courage, vision, decisiveness, assertiveness	<—————>	Bridge-building, consensus seeking, cooperation

p. 12). This term, however, carries strong negative connotations. Furthermore, the suggestion needs to be avoided that weaker leadership is less effective (see Stone, 1989; Greasley & Stoker, 2008). Therefore, this study draws on the distinction between ‘directive leadership’ and ‘participative leadership’ that is widely applied in private sector management literature (Bass & Bass, 2008, pp. 458-496), and has also found its way into public administration (e.g., Baumgartel, 1957), and the study of local government (e.g., John & Cole, 1999).

On this continuum, the directive leadership style, being strong, decisive, non-participative, and proactive, is by definition more authoritative than a facilitative leadership style, which is characterised by partnership and cooperation (see Genieys *et al.*, 2004; Greasley & Stoker, 2008). Directive leadership in the behavioural sense entails that political-executive leaders have the ability to act against the public opinion in decision-making if necessary (Hendriks & Tops, 2000; Strøm, 2000; Haus & Sweeting, 2006; see also Haus *et al.*, 2005). Leadership, and especially directive leadership, amounts to making decisions that are not agreeable to all citizens (Ruscio, 2008, p. 3).⁴ Political leaders may see a “normative justification for acting contrary to the preferences of their voters”, to paraphrase Strøm (2000, p. 268).

The inherent tension between leadership and democracy, however, creates a serious challenge for such directive leadership. The democratic leadership dilemma is more acute for directive leaders because their authority is readily challenged, which poses a risk to the continuity of local governance and local policies. This study analyses local political-executives’ strategies in dealing with the tension between leadership and democracy, exploring the feasibility of directive leadership in a contemporary democratic context.

1.3 Directive leadership in a consensus context: even greater difficulties

Evidently, the difficulty of the democratic leadership dilemma for directive leaders depends on the type of democracy in which those leaders exercise their leadership. Context can act as a determinant of the nature of leadership (Bondel, 1987, pp. 4-5; Hernandez, Eberly, Avolio & Johnson, 2011, p. 1167). Even though there is no ultimate way out of the democratic leadership dilemma (Kane & Patapan, 2012, pp. 10-29), directive leadership and democracy can work together since some forms of democracy thrive under the guidance of certain types of leaders (McAllister, 2011, pp. 53-54). Particular leadership styles have affinity with certain types of democracy, which can combine to form a productive conglomeration (see Hendriks, 2010). Directive leadership, for example, has an affinity with pendulum democracy, in which political power alternates

between two competing political parties or protagonists. Such a democratic context provides a good breeding ground for directive types of political leadership (Hendriks & Karsten, forthcoming 2013).

The difficulty of the leadership dilemma also depends on the characteristics of the concrete democratic institutions in which leaders operate. For directly elected leaders the difficulty of the leadership dilemma *ceteris paribus* may be less serious because their leadership is backed-up by a separate popular mandate. At the same time the risks embedded in directive leadership may be greater for directly elected leaders because they are more dependent on continued support from the electorate. The democratic leadership dilemma remains inherent to political leadership (Kane & Patapan, 2012).

There is, however, one type of democracy that is quite common in Western Europe and that is on rather bad terms with directive leadership styles especially: the consensus democracy of, for example, Austria, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. Directive leadership and consensus democracy do not go well together, it is argued by leading scholars, because this type of democracy is defined as one that broadens the involvement in decision-making as widely as possible (Lijphart, 1999, pp. 31-47; Andeweg, 2000, p. 512; Hendriks, 2010).

In a consensus democracy political circumstances are particularly challenging for directive leadership because consensus democracies traditionally are inhospitable to the very idea of such individualised political leadership, to paraphrase Kellerman and Webster (2001, p. 487). Consensus democracies are characterised by consultation, compromise, and consensus seeking. Whereas its counterpart majoritarian democracy rests on the principle of competition (Lijphart, 1999), consensus democracy rests on the principle of integrating different interests as much as possible.

Consensus democracies are characterised, among other things, by a separation of power, the existence of strong checks and balances, institutionalised interdependencies between different actors, and by practices of consultation, coproduction, and coalition building (Lijphart, 1999; Andeweg, 2000; Hendriks, 2010). Although the characteristics of consensus democracy are generally of a more institutional nature rather than of a behavioural one (Andeweg, 2000, p. 513; 2001, p. 120), democratic decision-making in a consensus context typically is of a collective style (see Lijphart, 1999). Directive, authoritative, decisive, individualised decision-making in that sense is the antithesis of consensus democracy. That is why directive leadership is generally not appreciated in consensus democracies.

The Netherlands, which is predominantly considered to be a consensus democracy (Daalder, 1964; Lijphart, 1968, 1999; Hendriks, 2009), provides a good illustration. The country scores low on Hofstede's (2001) 'power distance' dimension of culture, which indicates that the strength of social hierarchy in the Netherlands is relatively low. In the Netherlands 'leadership' is traditionally approached with caution (Hendriks &

Tops, 2000; for a recent example, see Zijderveld, 2010); leaders are generally mistrusted ('t Hart, 2000). In the Netherlands respected leaders such as former Prime Minister Wim Kok, are bridge-builders, not bosses (Hendriks, 2010, p. 78). According to 't Hart (2005, p. 234), the Dutch consensus democracy, which is rooted in the country's law, institutions, culture, and its traditions, 'encages' administrative decisiveness. Checks and balances have been institutionalised throughout the political system.

One of the main checks on empowered individualised political-executive leadership in local government is the legal principle of collegiality. By law the municipal Board of Mayor and Aldermen is a collegial body, which means that its members collectively share responsibility and accountability for the board's decisions (Article 169, paragraph 1, Local Government Act). Although political-executives *de facto* carry individual responsibility for 'portfolios' (Derksen & Schaap, 2010, p. 65), formally the board is a collegial body: it acts as a single entity. This reduces individual members' room to manoeuvre (see also Section 4.2.1).

Together with collegial and consensual traditions, such regulations mean that Dutch local government provides an "unfavourable biotope" for directive political leadership ('t Hart, 2005, p. 234; see also Hendriks & Tops, 2000). This means that it will be difficult for the Dutch political-administrative system to accommodate the call for stronger leadership that is being expressed by both citizens and elites (SCP, 2010, 2011). Van Engelen (2005, p. 226) notes: "The new leaders will have to exercise leadership in a country that is equipped, both politically and culturally, to prevent them from doing so as much as possible."

The dilemma of democratic leadership is thus particularly serious in consensus democracies such as Austria, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. Here, local political leadership is strengthening too, while the countries' institutional and cultural makeups traditionally leave little room for such leadership. The leadership dilemma is aggravated by the fact that citizens have become more assertive and require increased responsiveness (Van den Brink, 2002; Lowndes & Leach, 2004, p. 568; Larsen, 2005, p. 208; Greasley & Stoker, 2008, p. 723). The coexistence of calls for strong, individual leadership on the one hand and for increased responsiveness on the other, increases the pressures on political-executive leaders and puts additional pressure on the principle of collective decision-making that is characteristic for consensus democracies (Goldsmith & Larsen, 2004).

But, whereas Steyvers *et al.* (2009, p. 14) signal a tendency to "break away from (...) more collective and consensual forms of leadership" in Europe, the consensual style of decision-making is still highly valued in consensus democracies (see e.g., Hendriks, 2011). Attempts to accommodate calls for more directive leadership are partly restricted by the principles that underlie the consensus democracy (Goldsmith & Larsen, 2004). The pressures on political leaders increase accordingly. Consequently, "[l]eadership has

now become even more full of contradictions; many demands are hard to reconcile”, argue Bergström, Magnusson, and Ramberg (2008, p. 203).

For that reason, new forms of leadership and new political repertoires are being sought after and are being developed by local political leaders (Borraz & John, 2004; ‘t Hart, 2005; Hajer, 2009; Schaap *et al.*, 2009, p. 235). These forms and repertoires have to contribute to lightening the democratic leadership dilemma, at least in the shape of a temporary equilibrium, by creating a tentative conglomeration of directive leadership and consensus democracy. This is one of the main challenges of contemporary local leadership (Verheul & Schaap, 2010).

Given the nature of democratic governance, an important aspect of these new forms of leadership and political repertoires is how political leaders attain authority for their decisions. Authority is after all an indispensable element of democratic decision-making. However, political leaders in general seem to have lost a considerable amount of their traditional authority (Kellerman & Webster, 2001, pp. 486-487; Papadopoulos, 2003; Hay, 2007; Hajer, 2009, pp. 14-47; Hendriks, 2009), which cannot be regained easily in a complex environment in which authority is continually challenged (Hajer, 2009, pp. 3, 14-47; Verhoeven, 2009; Dijstelbloem & Holtslag, 2010, p. 42). The strengthening of political leadership therefore needs to be accompanied by legitimacy and authority. After all, “the move towards stronger leadership is first and foremost a response to particular expressions of the ‘legitimacy crisis’ occurring in local and national politics” (Borraz & John, 2004, p. 108). Thus, a relevant question is how contemporary political leaders try to attain authority and which of their strategies are the more successful ones in doing so, and why. This question is particularly relevant in a consensus context.

Some political-executives may opt for more participative forms of leadership, like negotiation. Similarly, executives may turn to interactive decision-making, coproduction, networking, and facilitating, rather than steering (see Genieys *et al.*, 2004; Greasley & Stoker, 2008). Such approaches generally take the sting out of political leadership because they make it more participative. By contrast, this study focuses on political-executive leaders that opted for directive leadership styles in a climate of consensus seeking, with the intent to analyse the implications of directive leadership in such a context. All cases included in this study are cases of directive leadership in a consensus context. The current research asks whether directive leadership styles can effectively be reconciled with consensus democracy.

1.4 Accountability: a possible remedy

Several scholars have sought ways to reconcile the incongruent ideas of directive leadership and consensus democracy (e.g., Elzinga, 1999; ‘t Hart, 2005). With regard

to the European Union, Van Gerven, for example, argues that its governability would benefit from becoming a 'consensus democracy with a strong leadership'. In his view, "the fact that the European Union takes the form of a consensus democracy should not prevent it from having a strong executive" as long as the latter can be held to account effectively (Van Gerven, 2005, pp. 245-246). As it is in Van Gerven's model for the European Union, the leitmotiv of many such attempts to converge directive leadership and consensus democracy is the principle of 'accountability'.

The need to hold public leaders accountable has always been one of the cornerstone principles of democracy (Ruscio, 2008, pp. ix, xii), but parallel to the call for strong political leadership, the importance of their accountability has also increased (Berg & Rao, 2005, pp. 4-9). The idea is that strong leaders need to be accountable accordingly; the stronger they are, the more accountable they need to be. Contemporary leadership is strictly scrutinised leadership, argues Elzinga (1999, pp. 451-452; see also Peper, 2002; 't Hart, 2005; Keane, 2009; Verheul & Schaap, 2010). The strengthening of local leadership is therefore accompanied by calls to strengthen the accountability of local government. The accountability of leaders occupies a pivotal position in debates around contemporary local governance. Several authors signal a 'quest for accountability', or for 'new forms of accountability', throughout Western European democracies (Mulgan, 2003, pp. 1-2; Borraz & John, 2004, p. 115; Jos & Tompkins, 2004, pp. 594-595; Bovens, Schillemans & 't Hart, 2008, p. 225). The Netherlands is no exception (Berg & Rao, 2005, p. 10).

This thesis postulates that accountability may be an instrument to reduce the acuteness of the democratic leadership dilemma because accountability may perform a bridging function between directive leadership and responsiveness, as one of the mechanisms through which leaders (try to) attain authority. This is because accountability services the interests of both citizens and leaders at the same time.

From the perspective of the citizens, accountability a) allows citizens to control their elected representatives and thereby increases responsiveness (Lijphart, 2001, p. 133; Bovens *et al.*, 2008, pp. 230-231), b) prevents corruption and the abuse of power (Bovens *et al.*, 2008, pp. 231-232; Ruscio, 2008, p. 3), and c) enhances government effectiveness by providing learning opportunities (Bovens *et al.*, 2008, p. 232). Accountability aims to ensure leaders' responsiveness by providing citizens and others a platform for influencing public policy and the opportunity to sanction leaders in the case of unwanted decisions. From the perspective of the leader, accountability d) creates room to manoeuvre (Ruscio, 2008, pp. ix-xv) and e) increases legitimacy and support (Bovens & Schillemans, 2009, p. 32; Ruscio, 2008, p. 23). It is precisely because accountability ensures the existence of the possibility for holding leaders to account, that they are granted the room to manoeuvre that is necessary to exercise leadership.

This thesis focuses on the latter two advantages of accountability, postulating that the rendering of account provides leaders an opportunity to regain authority for directive leadership. It builds on the proposition that publicly explaining decisions increases public understanding (Ruscio, 2008, pp. xi, 23). The postulate stems from the fact that explaining and justifying decisions are important accountability activities and that these are at the same time closely related to the concept of authority since the act of explaining and justifying decisions goes back to the origins of the authority concept itself.

The Latin *auctoritas*, from which ‘authority’ derives, refers to a situation in which a person provides good reasons for his or her conduct in the eyes of the followers⁵ (‘t Hart, 2005). Authority, therefore, amounts to more than just the legitimate execution of power: the followers need to be convinced of the reasonableness of a leader’s reasoning and of the appropriateness of his conduct (‘t Hart, 2005, p. 228). The authority of directive public leaders depends on their abilities to successfully explain and justify their conduct (Van Gunsteren, 1999; Hajer, 2009). As the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy observes, “explainability has become a criterion to judge executive conduct” (Dijstelbloem & Holtslag, 2010, p. 53). Hence, a leader will have to explain and justify his or her conduct in order to attain authority, that is, state his intentions or motives in explanation of his conduct and show or maintain the justice or reasonableness of his conduct (Ruscio, 2008, p. xi). Accountability may be a mechanism that facilitates this process, because explaining and justifying decisions are important accountability activities of decision-makers.

Failing accountability arrangements

What is a problem, though, is that the effectiveness of traditional accountability arrangements has decreased significantly (McGarvey, 2001). Since political-executive leaders need to be accountable, it is important that the necessary mechanisms are in place that enable the ‘accountee’ (i.e., the person to whom account is rendered) to hold the ‘accountor’ (i.e., the person held to account) to account (Sullivan, 2003, p. 354). But, several scholars have claimed that the new modes of governance that have developed, have resulted in dilemmas of accountability and coordination (Papadopoulos, 2007; see also Steyvers *et al.*, 2009; Sullivan, 2003; Michels & Meijer, 2008) since these new governing arrangements erode traditional notions of accountability in the public sector with institutional complexity obscuring who is accountable to whom for what, to paraphrase McGarvey (2001, p. 23). Holding public leaders to account through these mechanisms has become more difficult.

A number of scholars claim that traditional institutional and theoretical frameworks nowadays fail to provide for effective accountability arrangements (Pierre & Peters, 2000; Flinders, 2001; Sullivan, 2003, p. 355; J. Freeman, 2006). Traditional

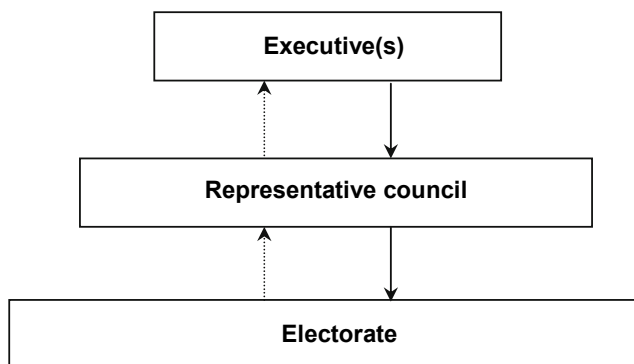
accountability theories and existing arrangements are being outdated by the rapidly changing practice of public accountability (see, e.g., M. de Vries, 2007).

This applies in particular to those accountability arrangements, i.e., accountability relationships that have adopted an institutional character, that belong to the ‘accountability regime’ of the traditional representative democracy (Bovens, 2007). This regime entails a more or less coherent complex of accountability arrangements and accountability mechanisms. It is characterised by a ‘chain of delegation’ running from the citizen to the representatives to the executives, and a ‘chain of accountability’ running in the opposite direction (Strøm, 2000). The electorate delegates legislative responsibilities to representatives who, in turn, are accountable to the electorate. Likewise, the executive board is accountable to the representative council that delegates executive responsibilities to the board. This regime is represented in Figure 1 in which the dashed, upward arrows represent the chain of delegation and the uninterrupted, downward arrows represent the chain of accountability.

In collegial governance systems, the board-council accountability relationship is a complex one in that the board’s members share accountability for the board’s decisions by law, whereas accountability *de facto* has individualised to a large extent. Generally, political-executives carry individual responsibility for portfolios and are held to account individually as well. Formally, though, the basic accountability regime of the traditional representative democracy remains intact.

The ability of this regime to provide for effective accountability is eroding because several of its mechanisms no longer constitute a viable way of holding local political leaders to account (see Quinn, 2007, pp. 23-24). Political parties, for example, do not function as accountability mechanisms to the same extent as they used to because of party fractionalisation (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2002, p. 4). Similarly, the political accountability of councillors to their constituents has been eroded by the profession-

Figure 1. The accountability regime of the representative democracy



alisation of councils because the former tend to take a rather inward-looking approach (Denters, Klok & Van der Kolk, 2005, p. 22). Neither do popular elections function as full-blown accountability mechanisms because it cannot be assumed that citizens' votes are retrospective in operation rather than future-oriented (Papadopoulos, 2003, p. 487) and because of the nationalisation of local elections and limited citizens' involvement in local politics (Denters *et al.*, 2005, p. 22; Quinn, 2007, p. 23).

One of the main explanatory factors for the diminishing effectiveness of the traditional accountability mechanisms is the increasing institutional complexity that accompanies the emergence of governance structures, as this obscures who is accountable to whom for what (McGarvey, 2001, p. 23; see also Orr, 2004, p. 338). Consequently, the effectiveness of the accountability regime is declining (Bovens, 1998, p. 279; Mulgan, 2003, pp. 188-225; Papadopoulos, 2003, p. 481; Wollman, 2008). The practice of governance makes it more and more difficult to hold political-executive leaders to account for their actions in traditional ways (see Rhodes, 1997; Pierre & Guy Peters, 2000; Kjær, 2004). "The intricacies of governance make accountability more abstruse. (...) The move to governance has increased rather than diminished the tensions arising from the accountability issue", Quinn (2007, p. 23) claims.

The reason is twofold. First, the interdependencies between public actors, and also between public and private actors, have increased (Kickert, Klijn & Koppenjan, 1997). This has reduced the autonomy of political-executive leaders because they are less able to steer society; their 'power over' (Stone, 1989) society has been reduced. Decision-making power has become more and more dispersed (Kjær, 2004, p. 50). "Accountability disappears in the interstices of the webs of institutions which make up governance", Rhodes (2000, p. 77) observes. This raises the question whether accountees can still effectively hold public leaders accountable as single actors since they share their power with others (see Mulgan, 2003, p. 192). Second, the actual contribution of political-executive leaders to the decision-making, which is characterised by negotiation between different actors, becomes less identifiable because decision-making becomes more fragmented and more complex in a multi-actor setting (Considine, 2002). Hence, the 'problem of the many hands' (Thompson, 1980) becomes more salient (Sullivan, 2003, pp. 354-356). In other words, it becomes more difficult to attribute responsibility. So how can one hold political-executive leaders accountable if one does not know what their actions are?

The fear among many is that "governance through the formation of networks composed of public and private actors (...) may (...) make public governance less transparent and accountable" (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009, p. 234; see also Michels & Meijer, 2008; Steyvers *et al.*, 2008, p. 136; Steyvers *et al.*, 2009, p. 16). Governance structures are therefore believed to suffer from a deficit of democratic accountability (Kjær, 2004, pp. 49-50; Papadopoulos, 2007, p. 470). This may hamper the public's ability to hold public

leaders to account and, through that, control the exercise of political power and the spending of public means, which is one of the cornerstone principles of contemporary democratic governance.

1.5 Troublesome accountability in a consensus context

These developments are particularly relevant for consensus democracies because the latter are already considered as being weak on accountability. Consensus democracies are “strong on inclusiveness and weak on accountability” (Andeweg, 2001, p. 123; see also Lijphart, 2001, p. 133). In consensus democracies “it is obviously much more difficult to identify who is responsible” than it is in majoritarian democracies (Lijphart, 2001, p. 133). The fact that so many actors are involved as a consequence of the desire to “broaden the involvement in decision making as widely as possible” (Andeweg, 2000, p. 512), makes it much more difficult to trace an actor’s contribution in the decision-making process. Collective decision-making supposedly lacks accountability because it blurs the political differences between actors (see Larsen, 2005, p. 199; also Strøm, 2000). Consequently, accountability in consensus democracies is fragmented since it is difficult to hold a single actor to account (Hendriks, 2009, p. 482; 2010).

What is more, as so many actors are involved in consensual decision-making they may not be inclined to hold each other to account; they share responsibility for the decisions and are dependent upon one another. Holding each other to account may, therefore, not be opportune. As a result the rendering of account in consensus democracies may turn into ‘theatrics’, Van Gunsteren (1999, p. 16) claims. This could lead to a political culture arising, in which the practice of accountability degenerates into the merely symbolic act of saying you are sorry because sanctions are not enforced (Van Thijn, Alink & Van Dijk *et al.*, 1998). In a consensus democracy the instrument of accountability may become a “rather blunt weapon” (Aarts & Thomassen, 2008, p. 7). Thus, consensus democracies’ inclusiveness comes at the expense of accountability (Hakhverdian & Koop, 2007, p. 407; compare Aarts & Thomassen, 2008, p. 17). The need to resolve the lack of effective accountability in contemporary local government is, therefore, even more compelling in consensus democracies.

From an outsider’s perspective, though, the need for effective accountability has not reduced since it is still one of the core aspects of democracy. The public accountability of political leaders remains an essential element of democracy and good governance. In fact, a number of scholars claim that political leaders have been confronted with a greater demand for public accountability in recent years (McGarvey, 2001; Mulgan, 2003, pp. 1-2; Papadopoulos, 2003; Jos & Tompkins, 2004, p. 255; Melo & Baiocchi, 2006, pp. 594-595). Citizens, media, associations, and others increasingly expect political

leaders to render account of their actions, to explain and justify their conduct, they claim. Some scholars even claim that accountability has become a constituting element of contemporary democracy (e.g., Keane, 2009, part III).

Others argue that the recent demand for public accountability should be interpreted differently. Citizens and others are not so much asking for *more* accountability, as for different kinds of accountability, they argue (e.g., Romzek, 2000). Studying the effectiveness of the present day accountability arrangements might, therefore, require a different perspective than the numerical one, because discussing accountability in terms of 'less' or 'more' renders it a one-dimensional, linear concept (Romzek, 2000). There seems to be more to accountability than quantity alone. More accountability does not necessarily lead to better government. In addition, both a shortage of accountability and an accountability overload can be problematic (Bovens & 't Hart, 2005; Bovens *et al.*, 2008, p. 227ff). The expectations citizens and other accountees have of their accountability relationships with political leaders not only apply to the number of accountability arrangements as such, but also to the characteristics of accountability mechanisms.

The same may hold for political-executive leaders themselves, who have an interest in the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms in terms of the opportunities they offer to create room for leadership and to increase legitimacy and support. If this thesis' main postulate is empirically adequate, there is a strategic element to the rendering of account that can be exploited by political leaders (see also Shapiro, Buttner & Barry, 1994). In any case, leaders too may have expectations with regard to the characteristics of the accountability arrangements in which they operate, the effectiveness of which, in terms of regaining authority, may differ.

Romzek (2000) has developed an approach to accountability that recognises this multiplicity and complexity of citizens' and leaders' interests and demands. "In fact, calls for 'more' accountability are often calls for a reliance on a 'different kind' of accountability with different expectations for performance, rather than just 'more of the same'", she argues (Romzek, 2000, p. 35). The new channels for accountability that are being established (Mulgan, 2003, p. 2; Schillemans, 2007, p. 23; Bovens *et al.*, 2008) may therefore be seen as attempts to improve the effectiveness of accountability, rather than attempts to create more opportunities for holding political leaders to account alone.

From this perspective there is a need for a better fit between the interests of citizens, councillors, and political-executives and the demands placed by them on the accountability on the one hand, and the arrangements through which it operates on the other. These interests and demands, and the circumstances in which they are expressed change over time. Accountability arrangements need to be adapted accordingly. Changing circumstances call for the necessity to continuously reconsider and

redesign accountability arrangements in order to maintain, or reestablish, the fit between their characteristics and the demands that are placed upon them. This goes for the institutional design of accountability arrangements as well as their day-to-day procedures, and also for the particular accountability cultures operating within them (see Van Montfort, 2001).

Such adaptation of existing accountability arrangements and design of new ones can nowadays be witnessed throughout the public sector (Bovens *et al.*, 2008, p. 225), also in local government (Borraz & John, 2004, p. 113; see also Loughlin, 2001; Denters *et al.*, 2005, p. 22; Quinn, 2007, pp. 23-24). This sometimes leads to concrete innovative accountability arrangements. The Dutch municipality of Rotterdam has, for example, introduced an annual 'accountability day', on which the municipal executive explained and defended its policies in a public debate with citizens.

Recent changes in politics and administration, such as the shift from government to governance, have resulted in a renewed drive in many Western democracies to reestablish existing public accountability arrangements and to create innovative accountability mechanisms (Bovens *et al.*, 2008, p. 225). Some scholars even argue that the practice of governance itself is a search for new forms of accountability (Hirst, 2000, p. 14; Kjær, 2004, p. 11). Likewise, the strengthening of political-executive leadership is one of the remedies that is designed to enhance the accountability of local government (Borraz & John, 2004, pp. 114-115; Lowndes & Leach, 2004, p. 557; Berg & Rao, 2005, pp. 4-9; Larsen, 2005; Steyvers *et al.*, 2009, pp. 14-16). When powers and responsibilities are concentrated in the hands of an individual executive leader, it is easier to determine who is accountable and to hold him or her to account effectively, at least in theory. Strong local leadership may consequently ease the problem of the 'many hands' stemming from local governance structures, because individualised leadership brings agency.

1.6 An alternative approach to accountability

The question of democratic accountability in contemporary local governance in relation to leadership has thus received a considerable amount of attention. Strong political-executive leadership is designed to solve some of the accountability problems of contemporary governance. At the same time it is important to have the necessary arrangements in place to be able to hold the new public leaders to account. Hence, the discourses about 'contemporary public leadership' and 'modern accountability' are closely connected.

In the debate about the relation between the two, the potential of accountability as a source of authority is as yet under-explored. What has received relatively little attention up till now is how political leaders use accountability relationships to attain

authority, as well as the possible consequences that the decreasing effectiveness of traditional accountability has for leaders' abilities to generate authority through rendering account. Because of the increased importance of political-executive leadership and the importance of explaining and justifying decisions in order to attain authority with regard to one's leadership, political leaders can be expected to use and build on the room that accountability mechanisms provide for political leadership (see Section 1.4). This means that political leaders can themselves also be expected to have goals and aims with regard to accountability relationships and the practice of rendering account. Surprisingly enough, till so far, these goals and aims have received little attention in the literature on accountability.

This underexposure may be explained by the fact that most scholars that have analysed accountability relationships have done so from the perspective of the accountee rather than that of the accountant. As a result the literature has missed out on the accountant's perspective on accountability and the potential of accountability as a mechanism for generating authority.

The dominance of the accountee's perspective may be explained by the fact that 'being called to account' by an accountee is the core sense of accountability (Mulgan, 2000, p. 555). Accountability is primarily about holding someone to account. Consequently, theoretical frameworks that are used to study the effectiveness of accountability relations are generally based on the perspective of the accountee, in whose interest it is that accountability allows citizens to control their elected representatives, thereby increasing responsiveness, preventing corruption and the abuse of power, and enhancing government effectiveness by providing learning opportunities (see Section 1.4). Seen from these perspectives, the expectations and demands of the accountee are a logical starting point for the analysis because they are one of the main triggers for rendering account.

However, these are not the only expectations and demands that come into play in public accountability relationships. As discussed in Section 1.4, political-executive leaders may, with regard to their own accountability, bring very different expectations and aims to the table than their accountees. Although some scholars have even defined the accountability concept in terms of the accountant's willingness to render account (e.g., Hunt, 2006, p. 44), accountors' expectations of accountability have received little attention as yet.

In a way this turns the tables on traditional accountability; what expectations do political-executive leaders themselves have of the ways in which they render account, and to which aims must the rendering of account contribute in their view? When does accountability 'work' in the eyes of those rendering account? In the literature on accountability the accountant's perspective is often overlooked. The number of empirical studies that have thoroughly researched the as yet little understood practice of public

accountability from this perspective is limited, especially considering the influential role accountors play in shaping this practice.

This study, therefore, proposes an additional approach to accountability that focuses on the aims of the accountor, rather than those of the accountee. Executive leaders that render account may have their own motives for doing so, given the obligations they have, which shape the way in which they render account. Fully understanding the actual practice of accountability, which so far has received little attention (Brandsma & Schillemans, forthcoming 2013), therefore requires an understanding of how political-executive leaders shape accountability relationships. After all, the practice of accountability is established in interaction (Behn, 2001; Flinders, 2001; Sullivan, 2003, p. 354; Mulgan, 2003; Dowdle, 2006b; Bovens, 2007). Taking the perspective of the accountor may provide valuable insights about the practice of public accountability. It is for this very reason that this thesis has this perspective as its starting point, with the intent to gain a further understanding of the actual practice of accountability in relation to accountors' authority. It analyses the relationship between accountability and authority in the case of directive leadership in a consensus context.

1.7 Research question

The previous sections have underlined the theoretical relevance of studying the practice of accountability from a leader-centric perspective (see 't Hart, 2011); it deepens the understanding of the changing practice of accountability and of how political leaders (try to) attain authority through rendering account, that is, by explaining and justifying their decisions in accountability relationships. To sum up, a particularly relevant question is how contemporary political leaders try to attain authority through rendering account and which of their strategies are the more successful in doing so. This question is particularly relevant in the context of directive local leadership in consensus democracies. The above culminates in the following research question for this thesis:

How does the rendering of account influence local political-executive leaders' authority in the case of directive decisions in a consensus context?

This study analyses accountability practices from a leader-centric perspective. It focuses on the opportunities the rendering of account offers leaders for regaining authority, rather than on the opportunities accountability offers accountees to exercise control.

It perceives the rendering of account as a means in the hands of political-executives as opposed to a burden placed on them by councillors and citizens. The aim of this complementary perspective on accountability practices is to deepen the understanding of how accountability operates and of what contemporary local public leadership amounts to.

The main research question can be divided into four sub-questions:

- a) How does the authority of local political-executive leaders develop when making directive decisions in a consensus context?
- b) Which accountability strategies do local political-executive leaders employ?
- c) What are the effects of executives' accountability strategies on their authority?
- d) What can be learned from the analysis with regard to both public leadership studies and public accountability theory?

The first two sub-questions are of a descriptive nature. Sub-question a) analyses how local political-executive leaders' authority develops over the course of time as they make directive decisions in a consensus context. The second sub-question, b), delineates the characteristics of the accountability strategies employed by local political-executive leaders in practice when making such directive decisions in a consensus context. The third sub-question, c), is of an explanatory nature and links the answers to the first two questions: an analysis is provided of the mechanisms through which the rendering of account affects authority in particular contexts. In contrast to the first three sub-questions that are of an empirical nature, sub-question d) is of a more theoretical nature. It assesses the empirical results' main implications for the two main bodies of literature this thesis aims to contribute to, that is, public leadership studies and public accountability theory.

The answers to these questions will be provided through a comparative case study of six cases of directive, that is, decisive, non-participative decision-making by local political-executives in the field of human service facility siting, i.e., highly controversial decisions on locations for facilities for homeless people, drug addicts, etc. The cases came from five cities in the Netherlands and Flanders: Rotterdam, The Hague, 's-Hertogenbosch, Antwerp, and Ghent. The rationale behind these choices is elaborated on in Chapter 4.

1.8 Structure of the book

This chapter introduced the research question and the underlying practical and theoretical puzzles. Chapter 2 provides a conceptual exploration of the two main concepts: accountability and authority, and develops a candidate-theory about the relationship between the two. In Chapter 3 an analytic framework is developed for the study of this relationship. The research strategy and methodology are explained in more detail in Chapter 4. Chapters 5 through to 10 consist of case study reports, of which Chapter 11 provides a comparative analysis. Finally, Chapter 12 discusses the findings' main theoretical and practical implications.

2

A conceptual and a theoretical framework of ‘accountability’ and ‘authority’

The previous chapter has introduced this thesis’ research question and the underlying practical and theoretical puzzles. The current study examines the relationship between the rendering of account by local political-executive leaders and their authority. Before such an analysis can be conducted, however, a conceptual exploration is needed that delineates what is understood by accountability and authority in this study and how the two are perceived to relate. Such an analysis is provided in Section 2.2. It provides the basis for the theoretical framework that is developed in Section 2.3 and for the analytical framework that is developed in Chapter 3. The aim of this chapter is to present the main features of the conceptual and theoretical frameworks and to place these in the body of public administration literature on accountability and authority. It starts off with a conceptual exploration of both ‘accountability’ and ‘authority’, respectively, in Section 2.1 and Section 2.2. Then, Section 2.3 discusses the link between those two concepts as it is perceived in the current study. A ‘candidate-theory’ is developed of how the rendering of account may influence authority.

2.1 Public accountability in contemporary Western democracies

Public accountability is without a doubt one of the cornerstone principles of contemporary Western European democracy. However, the accountability concept itself is essentially contested. Although there is general consensus that public leaders should be accountable, the number of different interpretations of what it actually means to be accountable is substantial. Accountability has a chameleon quality (Sinclair, 1995; Mulgan, 2000, p. 555), which causes considerable conceptual ambiguity (Bovens *et al.*, 2008, p. 226). This calls for a thorough conceptual exploration that delineates the meaning of the concept as it is used in this study.

2.1.1 A conceptual exploration of accountability

Ever since Richard Mulgan (2000) warned that ‘accountability’ was becoming an ever-expanding concept, and thereby was paradoxically losing its meaning, several scholars have attempted to arrive at more stringent definitions that try to capture what Mulgan

(2000, p. 555; 2003) called the ‘core sense’ of accountability, namely, ‘being called to account’ for one’s actions by another actor.

Mulgan’s conceptualisation of accountability belongs to a tradition in which accountability is used predominately in a descriptive sense. Among others, Mulgan studies how public actors are being held to account through certain social mechanisms empirically, as opposed to the American tradition in which accountability is primarily used as an evaluative, normative concept. In the latter tradition, the concept refers to ‘acting in an accountable way’ (see Bovens *et al.*, 2008, pp. 226-227). In that case the question is not so much whether leaders are being held to account by others or in what way, but whether public actors have acted ‘accountably’ in the sense of ‘good’ behaviour (see also Philp, 2009). By contrast, this study joins the descriptive tradition because it studies the empirical practice of accountability, that is, the calling to account and the rendering of account.

Within this tradition, too, there is no consensus on the definition of accountability. Substantial differences exist between the various descriptive approaches to accountability. In his often cited definition, Bovens (2007, p. 450) defines accountability as a social “relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has the obligation to explain and justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgement, and the actor may face consequences”. Although the basic idea behind this definition has received broad support in the literature on accountability, several aspects of this definition have been debated, and still are.

Debated conditions for accountability relationships

Accountability scholars, for example, disagree on whether the availability of sanctions is a necessary condition of an accountability relationship or not (Dwivedi & Jabbara, 1988; see also Mulgan, 2000; Bovens, 2007, pp. 451-452). Similarly, it is debated whether there should be a clear and distinguishable forum of accountees, or whether there can be accountability arrangements that lack such a forum (e.g., Thompson, 1980; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996).

Evidently, there is no right or wrong with regard to these conceptual issues, because different conceptions of accountability are involved rather than different operationalisations of one generally agreed upon conception. Therefore, such conceptual issues cannot be definitively resolved here. Alternatively, this section provides a conceptual exploration of ‘accountability’ as it is understood in this thesis, based on a delineation of three debates that are at the centre of the conceptual controversy over the accountability concept. Three constituting elements for accountability relationships are derived from the exploration.

The nature of the obligation to render account

One of the main conceptual controversies is the extent to which a public leader needs to be obliged to render account in order for an accountability relationship to exist, because in most conceptions of accountability this obligation is the main constituting element. Different positions on this issue can be distinguished, three of which will be discussed. These give an overview of the full range of positions in the debate.

Authors such as Mulgan (2003, p. 11), Bovens (2007, p. 450), and Schedler (1999, p. 17) state that the relationship between two actors is one of accountability only if one of the actors is obliged to render account to the other. In their view the 'right to demand' explanation and justification and the 'right to sanction' constitute an accountability relationship. According to these authors, both rights can be formal as well as informal in nature, but should still be perceived as rightful obligations. Such a conception of accountability is rather strict compared to the conceptions of other authors.

Philp (2009, p. 32), by contrast, employs a broader conception by defining accountability as follows: "A is accountable with respect to M when some individual, body or institution, Y, can require A to inform and explain/justify his or her conduct with respect to M." He takes up a middle position in the debate on the nature of the accountability obligation: he softens the strictness of the obligation by making it into an ability. According to Philp (2009, pp. 33-34) the requirement to inform and explain or justify can spring from Y's right to hold A to account, but also Y's power to hold A to account and everything in between. Philp, thus, recognises the necessity of some sort of compulsion, but in his view accountability does not depend on a rightful obligation, but can also stem from power constellations.

The difference between Bovens' and Mulgan's approaches on the one hand and Philp's on the other is that the former define accountability in terms of a *de jure* or *de facto obligation* to render account that is posed on the accountant, whereas the latter focuses on the *de facto abilities* of the accountee to require the accountant to render account.

In contrast to the two abovementioned positions on this issue, Hunt (2006, p. 44) lets go of the requirement condition altogether by defining accountability as "a preparedness to explain and justify one's intentions, actions and omissions to stakeholders, and the means by which this preparedness is manifested." Hunt thereby places the accountant in the centre of his definition of accountability, rather than the accountee. For Hunt, it is the preparedness of the accountant that constitutes the accountability relationship rather than the obligation/demand placed on him by the accountee. Michels and Meijer (2008, p. 168) take up a similar position by defining an accountability relationship in terms of the act of rendering account that is undertaken by the accountant.

The attractiveness of the latter perspective on accountability can be easily understood since the actual rendering of account is an important aspect of accountability.

Also, this perspective raises the highly relevant question whether or not the accountee's activities need to be successful in moving the accountant to actually rendering account in order to constitute an accountability relationship. After all, what is an accountability relationship worth without the actual rendering of account? What if the accountee has the formal right to hold someone to account, but the accountant fails to fulfil his or her requirements even though he or she is being held to account? Therefore, the willingness of an accountant and the actions that follow from that are of utmost importance.

However, definitions of accountability that start from the perspective of the accountant, like Hunt and Michels and Meijer's, have one essential shortcoming because they do not take into account what Mulgan calls the 'core sense of accountability'. They run the risk of suggesting that when the accountant does not recognise a social relationship as one of accountability, that is, if he fails to recognise an obligation to render account, the accountant is no longer accountable. This seems to be an undesirable outcome that fails to honour our intuitions with regard to accountability. Accountees sometimes want someone to be accountable even when he or she does not recognise the accountability relationship, and the former may also have the power to impose sanctions. For example, many wanted former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to be accountable for his conduct to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, even though Milosevic did not recognise the obligation to do so. It seems that this is a case of a malfunctioning accountability relationship, rather than the absence of one. After all, being called to account is the core sense of accountability, and not the recognition of the accountability relationship by the accountant.

The current study adopts Philp's empirical conception of accountability, which hinges on the accountee's actual abilities to require the accountant to render account. It holds that the obligation to render account is constituted by the accountees' abilities to require the accountant to render account. It should be noted that under this conception the accountee's abilities to call the accountant to account may be latent: Philp (2009) uses 'can require', not 'does require' in the above-mentioned definition. The accountees' powers may function proactively in the sense that the accountant may render account even when the accountee has not (yet) deployed his abilities to force the accountant to do so. Hence, the actual act of calling someone to account is not a necessary condition for an accountability relationship. An accountability relationship as such only constitutes the possibility to hold someone accountable (Mulgan, 2003, p. 10), but does not necessarily provoke the rendering of account.

The current study upholds 'being called to account' as the core sense of accountability (Mulgan, 2000, p. 555) in the sense that there needs to be an obligation to render account that can be effectuated by the accountee. At the same time it holds that the actual act of explicitly holding someone to account prior to the rendering of account

is not a *conditio sine qua non* of accountability relationships. In order to avoid Hunt's problem it also holds that the accountee is not the only possible source of the obligation to render account. If an accountee is not prepared to render account, this does not dismantle the accountability relationship as such since the accountant may still be forced to render account.

The source of the obligation to render account

This latter aspect is part of another important conceptual controversy that revolves around the source of the obligation to render account. Here, the question is not what the obligation to render account entails, but where the obligation originates.

A distinction can be made between three possible sources of the obligation to render account. First, the obligation may be placed on the accountant by the accountee. An employer may, for example, require an employee to render account for sabotaging the production line. This comes closest to Mulgan's core sense of accountability. The accountee places the obligation on the accountant. Philp's conception of accountability fits best with this line of thought because in his view the obligation to render account stems from the accountee's ability to require the accountant to render account. Second, the obligation may be self-imposed. An alderman may, for example, believe that he has the moral obligation to explain and justify his conduct to neighbourhood residents. In that case, the source of the obligation is the accountant himself. Hunt's conception of accountability fits best with this line of thought because he is of the opinion that the obligation to render account stems from the accountant's willingness to render account. For that matter, it is debatable whether self-imposed obligations are actually obligations since they cannot be enforced by others. The third possibility is that the obligation to render account springs from the context that surrounds the accountability relationship. In such a situation, the source of the obligation possibly lies outside the accountability relationship, but nevertheless constitutes the accountability relationship between two actors. A criminal may, for example, be legally accountable to a judge, as determined by law rather than by the judge himself.

These three sources of accountability are not mutually exclusive. Bovens (2007, p. 451), for example, claims that the obligation to render account can be a formal, legal obligation, but also a self-imposed one.

The current study agrees with Bovens in this respect, in the sense that it does not consider the source of the obligation to render account to determine whether an accountability relationship has been established. It holds that the obligation to render account constitutes an accountability relationship, irrespective of the source of the obligation. In that sense, the source of the obligation is irrelevant for the current study.

Table 2. Positions on the nature of the obligation to render account

	Hunt	Philp	Mulgan/Bovens
<i>Nature of the obligation</i>	Preparedness to render account	Ability to hold to account	Right to hold to account
<i>Type of obligation</i>	<i>De facto</i>	<i>De facto</i>	<i>De jure and de facto</i>
<i>Locus of the obligation</i>	Accountor	Accountee	Accountee
<i>Source of the obligation</i>	Accountor	Accountee	Accountee, accountor, or external

The current study, thus, adopts a position between Philp and Mulgan/Bovens in the sense that it considers the ability to hold the accountor to account to be constitutive for an accountability relationship, irrespective of its source.

Forward-looking accountability?

Another debate revolves around the question whether accountability is necessarily retrospective in operation, as Bovens *et al.* claim (2008; see also Mulgan, 2003, pp. 18-19), or whether actors can also render account for their future actions *ex ante*. Schedler (1999, p. 17), for example, explicitly includes future conduct in his definition of accountability (see also Schillemans, 2010, p. 308). Thus, for Schedler and others, explaining and justifying a decision in advance of actually taking it counts as rendering account, whereas it does not for Bovens and Mulgan. The difference for the study of the practice of accountability is apparent.

The current study coincides with the views of Bovens and Mulgan in that it considers accountability as being necessarily retrospective in operation. Account can only be rendered *ex post*. Up to the moment the decision is made, explaining and justifying one's considerations are part of the decision-making process itself, rather than a way of rendering account. Admittedly, explaining one's considerations prior to the actual decision-making can be an effective negotiation strategy that nears but is not quite the same as the rendering of account, because the decision may still be changed.

At the same time this study recognises that it is often quite difficult to pinpoint the making of the final decision. It does not employ a formalistic conception of decision-making that considers only formal decisions as final decisions. The 'real' decisions may have been made way in advance thereof. Still, it analytically distinguishes the rendering of account for a decision once it has been made from the complex process of decision-making.

Conditions that constitute an accountability relationship

Unmistakably, these three conceptual issues have not been fully resolved here. Further, many other conceptual issues remain. Yet, three basic constituting elements of accountability relationships can be derived from the analysis.

Conditions that constitute an accountability relationship

- A) There is an actor that is accountable, the accountant.
- B) The accountant can be required to render account to an accountee for past action.
- C) This ability stems from an obligation to render account.

Accountability is, thus, defined here as a social relationship between an actor and an accountee, in which the accountee can require the accountant to explain and justify his or her past action.

There is, of course, an important epistemological issue here because social relationships cannot be readily observed. Accountability relationships are not 'brute facts' (see Searle, 1995). They are socially constructed, and are primarily based on the perceptions of those involved, even though some accountability relationships are of a highly institutionalised nature. Accountability relationships only exist in the shared perception of those involved and need continuous reaffirmation, or 'enactment' (see Weick, 1995; Hajer, 2009).

This raises the epistemological question of when a relationship is considered to be one of accountability in the current study, especially since it is very difficult to validly and reliably establish what actors' perceptions of the nature of their relationship are. The fact that, for methodological reasons, the use of the word 'accountability' had to be avoided in the interviews that were conducted for this study (see Section 4.5) further complicated the issue. For that reason, a different approach was taken to the study of accountability, which may be considered to be behaviouristic. Accountability relationships were considered to be relationships in which an actor called another actor to account and/or in which one accountant rendered account to another actor. That is to say, the posing of evaluative questions by accountees and the explanation and justification of decisions by accountors were used as signifiers for accountability relationships. In other words, the manifestations of accountability relationships in the communicative interaction between actors were studied, rather than the subjective beliefs that would constitute perceived accountability relationships (see also Weick, 1995; and compare Blackburn's 2006 approach to the study of beliefs). Thus, the communicative acts of 'calling to account' and the 'rendering of account' were studied instead of accountability relationships as such.

To render account vs. to account for

In defining the concept of 'rendering account' this study draws from the work of Dubnick (2003) and Black (2008), who made a distinction between 'accountability' and 'being held to account' on the one hand and 'giving an account' or 'rendering account'

Table 3. Characteristics of ‘accountability’ as conceptualised in this study

<i>Use of the concept</i>	Empirical-analytical, non-normative concept
<i>Conception</i>	Social relationship
<i>Nature of the of study object</i>	State of affairs
<i>Core sense</i>	Being called to account
<i>Constituting element</i>	Obligation that forms the potentiality of being called to account
<i>Scope</i>	Retrospective in operation

on the other (see also Mulgan, 2000, pp. 569-570). It is the giving of account that is referred to by the phrase ‘rendering account’ here, rather than the existence of an accountability relationship. The term ‘rendering’ is used instead of the term ‘giving’ because it signals the distinction between the ‘rendering of account’ in the sense of political accountability and the ‘giving an account’ in the non-political sense of the word. Someone may give an account of his holiday to a friend, for example, but that is not perceived here as the rendering of account. The remainder of this sub-section elaborates on these distinctions.

Generally, ‘accountability’ is perceived as a state of affairs in which an accountability relationship exists between two actors, which in turn is constituted by the fact that the accountee can require the accountant to render account. ‘Accountability’ is constituted by the existence of a social relationship that implies the possibility that an actor is held to account by an accountee (Mulgan, 2003, p. 10). By contrast, consider Michels and Meijer’s (2008, p. 168) definition of accountability: “We define accountability as explanation and justification of actions and decisions; that is the actor who is accountable furnishes information about what s/he is doing, how and why, while at the same time somehow offering the party to whom s/he is accountable, opportunity to respond.”

Clearly, this definition of accountability is very different from the definition of accountability that was outlined above. Michels and Meijer define accountability as acts of explanation and justification. This may seem a viable approach at first sight because, as mentioned before, explanation and justification are important in accountability relationships. However, this definition suffers from an important shortcoming. This is because the definition provided lacks an elaboration of the necessary conditions for ‘being accountable’, which is one of the core aspects of conceptualising accountability. Not all acts of explanation and justification qualify as acts of rendering account, because the actor first has to be accountable. Yet, Michels and Meijer’s definition, nor the elaboration they offer, provide criteria that can be used to determine whether he or she is indeed accountable.

The distinction between ‘accountability’ and ‘rendering account’ helps to come to grips with this issue. Whereas the former refers to the existence of an accountability

relation, the latter refers to the actual act of explaining and justifying an action or a decision (see also Dubnick, 2003; Mulgan, 2003, p. 10; Black, 2008), or what Dubnick (2003, p. 407) calls the 'account-giving behaviour' of an accountor. The concept of 'rendering account for' covers the collection of communicative actions undertaken by an accountor in order to explain (i.e., to state one's intentions or motives in explanation of one's conduct) or justify (i.e., to show or maintain the justice or reasonableness of one's conduct in reference to (moral) values) a particular action or decision to an accountee. Table 4 characterises the two aspects of accountability practices that have been outlined.

This thesis focuses on the rendering of account rather than on accountability, as advocated by Black (2008, pp. 137-139). What is important here is that the actual act of rendering of account itself is not a prerequisite, nor a necessary condition, for an accountability relationship to exist. The accountor might for example, for some reason or another, decide not to render account, even though he or she perceives the situation as one of being in an accountability relationship with another actor. In fact, this is an often heard complaint: political-executive leaders would fail to fulfil their social obligations to render account for their decisions. Evidently, though, this would not dismantle the accountability relationship itself (see also K. P. Kearns, 1996). In other words, an 'accountability relationship' is a state of affairs, whereas 'rendering account' is an act that may or may not take place within this relationship. Michels and Meijer (2008) seem to mistakenly equate the state of accountability with the act of rendering account.

There are of course many situations in which public actors explain and justify their decisions and actions that are very different from the rendering of account in the political sense of the word. An alderman may, for example, explain and justify his or her decision to build a homeless shelter at a particular location to a close relative. This may or may not qualify as an accountability relationship, depending on one's conception of accountability, but it is certainly not a kind of rendering of account in the political sense. Although explanation and justification are involved here, they are not of a political nature. A whole range of similar relations between public actors on the

Table 4. Two aspects of accountability practices

	'Accountability'	'The rendering of account'
<i>Conception</i>	Social relationship	Communicative practice
<i>Nature of the study object</i>	State of affairs	Activity
<i>Constituting element</i>	Obligation that forms the potentiality of being called and held to account	Actual practice of explaining and justifying conduct
<i>Main study object</i>	Institutionalised relationships	Interactions between actors
<i>Representing authors</i>	Mulgan, Bovens	Dubnick, Black

one hand and public or private actors on the other can be envisioned in which explanation and justification are involved, but that are very different in nature from political accountability. Consider the professional accountability to one's colleagues (Romzek, 2000), the moral accountability to future generations (e.g., Gutmann & Thompson, 1996), the religious accountability to God, or the social accountability to friends.

This conceptual distinction between different types of relationship in terms of their political or non-political nature is very important because it allows for the making of a distinction between two sets of activities that both include justification and explanation, one of which is a way of rendering account in the political sense, and the other is not. To make this distinction linguistically recognisable, the phrase 'rendering account for' is reserved in this study for explanation and justification in the political sense and 'accounting for', or 'giving an account' is reserved for explanation and justification in the non-political sense.

To sum up, 'rendering account for' is defined here as follows:

Rendering account

The collection of communicative actions undertaken by a political actor in order to explain (i.e., to state one's intentions or motives in explanation of one's conduct) or justify (i.e., to show or maintain the justice or reasonableness of one's conduct in reference to (moral) values) a particular action or decision to an accountee.

The distinction between political actors and non-political accountors is made based on the role of actors as political decision-makers, that is, their role in making decisions on the authoritative allocation of value in society (Easton, 1953; Bondel, 1987). When a political-executive leader explains and justifies his actions in the role of a political-executive leader rather than as, for example, a friend or colleague, these actions are considered to be acts of rendering account. A distinction is, thus, made between acting as an office holder and acting in other, non-political, roles. As such, this conception of the political is more closely related to Mouffe's (2005) *le politique* than to *la politique* because it focuses on the political system and the actors that operate within it, the process of decision-making, and the implementation of these decisions, rather than on the nature of the values and considerations that are involved.

2.2 Authority in contemporary Western democracies

2.2.1 A conceptual exploration of authority

Like 'accountability', 'authority' has been defined in a variety of ways by different scholars. Several of them have traced the concept's origins back to Roman times (e.g., Friedrich, 1972, pp. 45-65; Lincoln, 1994, pp. 1-4; Arendt, 2006; Hajer, 2009, pp. 19-23). Since these authors provide extensive discussions on the concept, an elaborate history of its use will not be provided in this thesis. It is, however, necessary to give an account of how the concept is perceived in the current study and to conceptualise it, in comparison with the main schools that have developed with regard to the use of the concept. Overlooking the body of literature, a distinction can be made between two lines of thought as regards authority, or rather 'political authority' to which this analysis is limited, that is, the authority of political decision-makers (for other forms of authority see, e.g., Harris, 1976a; De George, 1985, pp. 21-25). These schools are referred to here as those of, respectively, 'external authority' and 'internalised authority'.

In the first line of thought, which, one could argue, relates to the continental tradition in political philosophy, authority is closely linked with (formal) institutions, with 'authorities' or 'regimes' (e.g., De George, 1985, p. 63ff). Authority is perceived as something that finds its roots in external institutions such as church, the state, or 'the law', which give authority an enduring and comprehensive nature. One of the main representatives of this school of thought is Hannah Arendt (2006). In her view 'authority' is closely linked with the concept of obedience. According to Arendt the following of an authority by its followers is less of a reflective act by the latter than it is an act that springs from the logic of appropriateness. Authority is something that is to be 'respected' in the sense that, to a large extent, the existence of authority is objective, that is, independent from subjective judgements of the followers or outsiders. From this perspective, authority is a scarce commodity that can only be held by a limited number of actors. Arendt even claims that in modern times 'authorities' no longer exist (Arendt, 2006). She argues that the traditional authorities have lost their positions and no institution has yet claimed their place.

In the second line of thought, authority is something quite different, namely, it is perceived as something that can be established in social relationships between individuals. Authority is internalised and privatised (Harris, 1976b, p. 1). Under this conception, authority is not so much possessed by an individual or an object, but rather created in the interaction between individuals. This makes authority something that is much more common in different types of relationships. At the same time it is less endurable and therefore more volatile. Under this conception, authority is much more difficult to pin down, and less open to objectification because it exists in the 'space between individuals' so to say.

Table 5. Two schools of ‘authority’

	External authority	Internalised authority
<i>Locus</i>	Regimes	Relationship between individuals
<i>Source of authority</i>	External institutions	Interaction between individuals
<i>Scope</i>	Diffuse authority	Specific authority
<i>Driving mechanisms</i>	Obedience	Reflection
<i>Epistemology</i>	Objectifiable / intersubjective	Enacted
<i>Representing authors</i>	Arendt	Friedrich

Inspired by the latter tradition, Hajer (2009, pp. 19-23) has developed a conception of authority that puts public reasoning at the forefront (see also Ruscio, 2008, p. xi). He argues that such a conception of authority is more helpful for the purpose of studying the practice of contemporary governance because it allows us to better analyse the functioning of authority in an age of governance, which is characterised by interdependence and cooperation, rather than hierarchical obedience (see also Friedrich, 1972, p. 62; Harris, 1976b). Such a conception of authority is particularly useful for this study because policymaking has undergone an argumentative turn that has increased the importance of explainability (see also Chapter 1).

There is, however, one difficulty with Hajer’s conception of authority that is highly relevant for the current analysis. Whereas Hajer pays a considerable amount of attention to the process through which authority is created, his conception of authority as such is less elaborate. Although Hajer provides a very comprehensive account of how to make an authoritative claim in the age of mediatisation, it becomes less clear what it is that is being created, what ‘having authority’ means. This makes it difficult to establish whether the rendering of account has made a difference to an executive’s authority. Being able to do so, requires a more thorough understanding of what authority is, or to be more precise, what constitutes authority. Such an essentialist desire for a well worked-out conception of authority may go against the grain with Hajer, but the body of literature on authority to which Hajer’s work closely relates provides a number of valuable leads for a more comprehensive conception of authority that, as an additional advance, can be operationalised more easily.

For the conceptualisation of authority this study seeks close alliance to the work of Carl J. Friedrich. According to Friedrich, “much authority rests upon the ability to issue communications which are capable of reasoned elaboration” (Friedrich, 1972, p. 46). Throughout his work he stresses “the crucial role of reasoning in situations where men follow other men without being compelled to do so” (Friedrich, 1972, p. 48). What, according to Friedrich, constitutes authority is that “convincing reasons” are provided for a particular course of action in the eyes of the followers (Friedrich, 1972, p. 48). By explaining the reasons why he acted in a certain way, a leader can convince his

followers that his course of action was reasonable, and thereby establish his authority, which in turn leads to men following him. The establishment of authority thus rest on the leader's capacity for reasoned elaboration, which according to Friedrich "should be designated as political authority" (Friedrich, 1972, p. 55). Authority is thus established through the production of words (Friedrich, 1972, p. 55).

In operationalising this conception of authority, one important question is of course: what are 'convincing reasons'? Although Friedrich does not explicitly address this question, he does touch upon the issue when he discusses the loss and gain of authority by political leaders. The level of authority possessed by political leaders, according to Friedrich, depends on the extent to which their reasoning "meshes with the value preferences of their following" (Friedrich, 1972, p. 61). A leader's reasoning must thus appeal to his followers' values and belief systems (Friedrich, 1972, pp. 61-65). Only then are 'convincing reasons' provided. For this reason, analysing accountees' values and expectations and comparing them to the account provided by the accountant is essential to the study of authority.

Another highly relevant question with regard to Friedrich's conception of authority is: what level of reasonableness constitutes authority in the eyes of the followers? Unfortunately, several incongruent answers to this question can be derived from his work. Friedrich believes there is a strong link between authority and persuasion (see Friedrich, 1972, pp. 45-56; compare Arendt, 2006; Furedi, 2009). When followers have been persuaded by the leader through reasoned elaboration, authority has been established. It remains unclear, however, what followers should exactly be persuaded of; do leaders need to gain assent, in the sense that the followers agree to the leader's conduct (see Friedrich, 1972, p. 55), or should they be convinced of the reasonableness thereof (see Friedrich, 1972, pp. 49, 55)? Alternatively, should they be convinced that the conduct is rational (see Friedrich, 1972, p. 55)?

These qualifications are fundamentally different since one can be convinced that a particular decision is reasonable without supporting it (Ruscio, 2008, p. 23). For example, the decision to locate a human service facility in a particular neighbourhood may be perceived as being reasonable by neighbourhood residents, given the socio-political context in which the decision was made, but that does not necessarily mean that those neighbourhood residents support that particular choice. The latter may still have a preference for other locations. Similarly, a location decision may be perceived as being reasonable but not rational when it is believed that rational as well as non-rational considerations are legitimate grounds for a location decision. After all, such decisions are almost inherently non-rational (Holton, Kramer & New, 1973).

What, then, constitutes authority? Clearly, there is no generally accepted answer to this question. It is more or less a matter of choosing a conception that fits best with the purpose of a study. Since this study, other than for example Esaiasson (2010), analyses

the authority of political-executive leaders rather than decision acceptance (see Chapter 1), a conception of authority that places decision acceptance at the forefront is less useful.

In search of an alternative conception that is more apt, the bodies of literature of different scientific disciplines provide several leads. Most instructive are the psychological and socio-political analyses that name successful justification as a crucial condition for authority. Most notably, procedural fairness theorists have shown that people assess the considerations that motivated authorities' decisions when they form a judgement of these decisions and so arrive at a verdict on their acceptability. In fact, justification, according to Tyler (2000, p. 122; see also Grimes, 2006), is a key antecedent of authority.

The interviews conducted for the current study corroborated this claim: (most) neighbourhood residents and other accountees placed intrinsic value on both the explanation and justification of location decisions by local leaders, independent of their attitude towards the location decision itself. Residents, representatives, and other accountees showed a genuine interest in the answer to the 'Why here?' question: why this particular location, rather than another? For example: "I am curious what the motivation behind [the location decision] is. [The executives] will have to provide a justification, otherwise resistance will stiffen" (Informant 45, 's-Hertogenbosch resident). This finding backs up the claim that citizens use substantive normative standards to evaluate government conduct (Miller, 1974; McGraw, Timpone & Bruck, 1993; Vittes, Pollock III & Lilie, 1993; Shapiro *et al.*, 1994).

This justifies employing a conception of authority in which a key verb is not 'to be persuaded', or 'to support', but 'to understand', in terms of a recognition of the reasonableness of a decision (compare McGraw *et al.*, 1993, p. 292-293). When accountees understand why a particular decision has been made, without necessarily agreeing to it or supporting it, the leader's authority is established. Authority, thus, is a state in which the reasons for the action are "understood by those effected, even if some remain opposed" (Ruscio, 2008, p. 23).

Based on this conceptual exploration, 'authority', or rather 'political authority' in the sense of the authority of political decision-makers is defined as follows:

Authority

A state in which a leader's followers believe that the former has provided good reasons for his conduct in the eyes of the latter, that is, reasons the followers find reasonable.

This conception of authority differs substantially from Max Weber's classic conception. His theory of authority included three ideal types of authority: traditional, legal-rational, and charismatic authority. Traditional authority stems from "an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them" (Weber, 1964, p. 328). Legal-rational authority is based on a "belief in the 'legality' of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands" (Weber, 1964, p. 328). Charismatic authority rests on the "devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him" (Weber, 1964, p. 328).

Weber's conception of authority, much like Arendt's, is closely linked to obedience. His theory of authority is basically a theory of legitimate rule, that is, a theory of what legitimates rule (Weber, 1961). Legitimacy is defined by Weber (1964, p. 382) in terms of a "willingness to obey" the commands of rulers that stems from a *Legitimitätsglaube*, that is, a belief that a particular leader is a legitimate ruler and should therefore be obeyed. In Weber's theory, perceptions of the sanctity of immemorial traditions, of legality of patterns of normative rules, and of exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, can evoke such a *Legitimitätsglaube*. Weber's theory of authority is, thus, mainly about the legitimacy of rulers as decision-makers, about the perceived legitimacy of their being 'in authority'.

By contrast, this thesis is not about legitimacy. Other than focusing on the willingness to obey a leader, this thesis focuses on followers' recognition of the reasonableness of a leader's concrete decisions (see also Shapiro *et al.*, 1994). It leaves open the possibility that accountees challenge the reasonableness of a particular decision that they believe has been made by a legitimate leader and *vice versa*. It is, thus, not about the position of the leader as a decision-maker and the legitimacy thereof, but rather about followers' attitudes towards the particular decisions of the leader. Authority is conceptualised as the extent to which accountees believe that the accountor has provided good reasons for those, not as accountees' attitude towards the political-executives in general, but only in relation to the concrete location decision.

Following David Easton's (1975) distinction of 'diffuse support', which refers to support for basic political arrangements, and 'specific support', which refers to support for concrete policies, this type of authority is referred to as 'specific authority', in other words, the authority of political decision-makers with regard to concrete decisions. In this study, the concept of 'specific authority' is mirrored by the concept of 'particular accountability' in contrast to 'general accountability', that is, accountability for specific decisions (see Mulgan, 2003, p. 28). From now on the more general terms 'authority' and 'accountability' are used for the sake of readability.

What is crucial in the conception of authority that is employed here is that to have authority, a leader does not necessarily have to make decisions that his followers support. Supporting a decision is essentially different from believing that a decision is reasonable (Ruscio, 2008, p. 23). To have authority, a leader's followers have to understand the reasoning behind the leader's decision to the extent that it is congruent with their values and belief systems. In other words, it is the recognition of the reasonableness of the leader's considerations that constitutes authority rather than the optional support for it. This means that support for a decision, or, conversely, opposition can only be proxies for the level of authority. Followers may oppose a decision while at the same time perceive it as being a reasonable one. Conversely, they may perceive a decision as being an unreasonable one, but still support it.

Admittedly, overlap between the two attitudes is very likely. It can be expected that opposition to decisions perceived as unreasonable is more common than opposition to decisions perceived as reasonable. This makes it very difficult to strictly separate the two. Regaining authority through the rendering of account is but one factor that potentially influences accountees' support for decisions. Chapter 4 describes several measures that were taken with the intent to overcome this methodological issue. These measures, however, will unfortunately not have sufficed in completely separating the effects of the rendering of account on support and other influences on support. In case study research this is an inherent risk.

Yet, the case study research method does permit at least an exploratory analysis of the relevance of the rendering of account for support by studying the factors that changed accountees' support for the decisions. The mechanisms that drive changes in support may, for example, be a) educating accountees about the facilities' clientele, b) involving accountees in facility management, c) minimising nuisance, d) adequately handling complaints, e) rendering account, etc. This thesis develops a candidate-theory that suggests that the rendering of account may influence support through authority, but at the same time recognises that the rendering of account quite likely is not a panacea for overcoming opposition. Many more factors than the rendering of account alone will influence accountees' support for location decisions. Although the overall relative impact of each of these factors cannot be established definitively using a small N comparative case study, it is possible to develop informed hypotheses about the relative impact, based on an exploratory analysis of the relative impact of such factors in individual cases. Such an analysis was conducted through studying how accountees' attitudes towards the locations developed over time. Each case study report in Chapters 5 through to 10 includes an appraisal of the relative impact of the rendering of account for support using the five-point scale from Table 6.

Table 6. Measures of the relative impact of the rendering of account on support

Relative impact measure	Relevance of the rendering of account for support
High impact	The rendering of account is a decisive factor in changing accountees' support
Substantial impact	The rendering of account has significant impact on accountees' support
Limited impact	The rendering of account has a peripheral effect on accountees' support
Very limited impact	The rendering of account has a negligible effect on accountees' support
No impact	The rendering of account has no effect on accountees' support

2.2.2 Operationalisation of challenges to authority

A follow-up question is: what level of perceived reasonableness constitutes authority? In other words, to what extent must an accountee perceive a decision as reasonable, so that authority is established, departing from the definition of authority provided in the previous section?

Since perceptions of what 'good reasons' for a decision are differ substantially between accountees because of differences in the values and belief systems of accountees (Friedrich, 1972), it was decided not to operationalise authority in absolute terms. This would result in the authority of different accountors becoming incomparable. Neighbourhood residents in 's-Hertogenbosch, for example, may be more critical of the reasonableness of location decisions in general than neighbourhood residents in Ghent, which, using an absolute measure for authority, would mean that 's-Hertogenbosch aldermen *ceteris paribus* would have less authority than those in Ghent.

What this study is interested in is political-executives' ability to regain authority for controversial decisions. For that reason a relative operationalisation of authority was opted for. Authority is operationalised in terms of the extent to which it is challenged, that is, the extent to which the reasonableness of the concrete location decision is disputed by accountees (see also McGraw *et al.*, 1993, p. 292). It will therefore not be claimed that a particular political-executive has authority and another does not. Rather, it will be claimed that the specific authority of a particular political-executive is challenged by a particular accountee, and that the authority of another political-executive is not.

To measure the relative challenge to the specific authority of a political-executive a five-point scale was used that indicates the extent to which the reasonableness of a location decision was challenged. In each of the interviews accountees were explicitly asked the questions: 'What did/do you think of the location decision?'. These questions sufficed to generate perceptions of reasonableness of the location decisions and an account of the development therein over time. Descriptions of past beliefs, though, were mainly based on document analysis, with the intent to counter the problem of poor memory. Accountees' responses to location decisions were coded using the codes listed in Table 7. The table also specifies the indicators that were used to determine

Table 7. Codes for the relative strength of challenges to authority

Strength of the challenge to authority	Code	Words or phrases referring to the choice or the location ⁶
Very strong challenge	Detestable choice	Very bad, inconceivable, awful, beggars belief
Strong challenge	Bad choice	Bad, unsuitable, inappropriate, untenable
Significant challenge	Tolerable choice	Acceptable, tolerable, location/decision I can live with
Weak challenge	Understandable choice	Agreeable, fine, suitable, better, tenable, good alternative
No challenge	Good choice	Reasonable, sensible, good, best possible

the extent to which the reasonableness of a location decision was challenged when analysing interviews or other conversations and documents.

The extent to which political-executives regained authority over time was operationalised as the change in the strength of the initial challenge to authority, again using a five-point scale (see Table 8).

Following the above conceptualisation of ‘authority’, the extent to which authority was regained by political-executives was measured by the relative change in accountees’ evaluations of the reasonableness of the local decisions. Accountees’ collective attitude changes (if any) to the location decisions were measured through coding evaluations of the location decisions found in interviews, observations, and documents from different time periods (see Chapter 4). ‘Improvement’ means that accountees have come to evaluate the reasonableness of the location decision more positively after they have been rendered account to. Conversely, ‘decline’ means that accountees have become more critical of the perceived reasonableness of the location decision.

As has already been indicated, support for or opposition against the location as such was not used as a measure for authority, since it can only function as a proxy thereof. The level of opposition was used as a case-selection criterion (see Chapter 4), but not as a measure for authority. This is because whether someone finds a decision reasonable and understands the decision-maker’s considerations and whether someone supports or opposes a decision are interrelated but essentially different questions. In this thesis ‘authority’ is measured solely on the basis of perceptions of reasonableness. In Easton’s

Table 8. Operationalisation of the rise to challenges to authority

Rise to the challenge to authority	Indicators
Significant improvement	Two or more steps of decline in the challenge to authority
Moderate improvement	One step of decline in the challenge to authority
Little to no change	No change in the challenge to authority
Moderate decline	One step of strengthening in the challenge to authority
Significant decline	Two or more steps of strengthening in the challenge to authority

(1965, 1975) terms, the analysis focuses not on overt, or public behaviour, 'overt support', but on underlying attitudes, as revealed in interviews, personal communication, etc., *in casu* the evaluations of the reasonableness of the decision⁷. This means, for example, that the absence of public protest and feelings of acquiescence as such are not indications of authority. Someone who believes that a decision is reasonable may after all still disagree with it. Likewise, someone who gave up on fighting a decision because he believes that resistance is futile may still believe that the decision is unreasonable. Thus, the questions of support and authority need to be treated as distinct. But since the issue of support carries strong practical relevance and is at least related to the issue of authority, it is discussed separately in each of the empirical chapters and in Chapter 11.

2.3 A theoretical framework of the rendering of account and authority

Having conceptualised accountability and authority, this section builds the theoretical framework that explicates how the two are perceived to relate. Before doing so, however, the empirical question as to whether the two are related will be answered briefly.

2.3.1 Does the rendering of account make a difference for authority?

Chapter 1 identified accountability, or rather the rendering of account, as an important link between directive leadership and authority. However, it presupposed the connection between the two based on the *a priori* idea that the authority of public leaders depends on their abilities to successfully explain and justify their conduct, and did not perceive it as an empirical phenomenon. Such a conception of the function of the rendering of account is common in the public administration literature.

Friedrich (1972; see also 't Hart, 2005; Lijphart, 2001, p. 133; Berg & Rao, 2005, pp. 4-9), for example, establishes a direct theoretical link between the two concepts. He claims that the process of rendering account, defined as the explanation and justification of one's conduct, is one of the mechanisms through which reasons are communicated and that therefore contributes to the establishment of authority as perceived here. The most explicit link between the rendering of account and authority is Friedrich's emphasis on the importance of responding to one's followers' questions, 'Why was this decision made as it was?' and 'Wherefore was it made?' (Friedrich, 1972, p. 58). Others take a normative approach to the issue by stating that leaders have the (moral) obligation to explain and justify their course of action (e.g., Ruscio, 2008, p. xi; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996).

Valid as these approaches may be in their own right, they do not yet answer the underlying empirical question, that is: do explanation and justification of conduct make an actual difference in the extent to which citizens and others regard leaders as having authority? In other words, does rendering account indeed foster authority in ‘the real world’? And if it does, how? A number of procedural fairness⁸ theorists have postulated that the rendering of account has the potential to contribute to someone’s authority (e.g., Tyler, 2000, p. 122; Esaiasson, 2010; see also McGraw *et al.*, 1993). They hold that the psychology of authority, amongst others, rests upon cognitions about the authority’s beliefs and motivations (Tyler & Lind, 1992, p. 166). Yet, the empirical adequacy of this claim is still under-explored. Although procedural fairness theorists have extensively considered the extent to which people believed that decision-makers considered their views when making decisions, the actual rendering of account in terms of explaining and justifying decisions *ex post* is generally not included as a measure of procedural fairness conceptualised as fair treatment (e.g., Tyler & Lind, 1992; Van den Bos, Wilke & Lind, 1998; Colquitt, 2001; see also Van den Bos, 2005). The question whether the assumptions regarding the rendering of account are indeed corroborated by empirical data is under-explored up till now.

But, as presupposed, this study finds that the rendering of account by leaders had an observable influence on accountees’ attitudes towards the location decision. One of the Informants (14, neighbourhood resident), for example, expressed her attitude change towards the local executive board as a consequence of account being rendered to her as follows:

I had not expected to be allowed to comment [on the location], and that was indeed the case. (...) It had already been decided upon. But when you then find out that they have given it really good thought, I think to myself: “Yes, they have given it really good thought.” That is what it [the rendering of account, NK] brings me: insight into the considerations and a little understanding.

For this Informant, it was the rendering of account that created a more positive attitude towards the location decision; her perception of the reasonableness of the location decision improved. And, whereas she still did not agree with the location decision, she understood and accepted it because she ‘acknowledged’ its reasonableness and therefore showed understanding. The other interviews corroborated this finding.

2.3.2 Linking the rendering of account to authority

Now that the empirical link between the rendering of account and authority has been established, tentatively at least, a theoretical framework is needed that allows for interpreting this connection and for establishing when authority has been attained

through the rendering of account. The body of public administration literature provides a multitude of such frameworks, of which some are *a priori* in nature whereas others are *a posteriori* in nature.

A priori conceptualisations of the link between the rendering of account and authority do not fit the current study. It cannot be presupposed that the rendering of account (always) affects accountees' perceptions of the reasonableness of leaders' location decisions. Some accountees may well be unsusceptible to public reasoning. Others may believe that an accountant's explanation and justification are not convincing. The extent to which the rendering of account actually influences authority is, therefore, perceived as an empirical question, which renders *a priori* conceptions of the link between accountability and authority unsuitable. If it had been presupposed that the rendering of account influenced authority, the line of argument in this thesis would have been circular.

Neither, however, is a truly *a posteriori* approach suitable for the current study. Such an *a posteriori* conception of the link between accountability and authority might have been developed through a grounded theory study on accountability and authority (for which, see Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Tummers & Karsten, 2012). Yet, the current study already employs an *a priori* conception of authority: on a theoretical basis authority was defined as a perception of reasonableness, other than on the basis of the lived experiences of accountees. Thus, since authority was defined as 'a state in which a leader's followers believe that the former has provided good reasons for his conduct in the eyes of the latter', the conceptualisation of the link between accountability and authority, too, depends on that *a priori* conception. This renders a truly *a posteriori* approach unsuitable.

This means that a happy medium has to be found between *a priori* and *a posteriori* conceptions of the link between accountability and authority. That is, a theoretical framework is required that conceptualises authority as a perception of reasonableness, but that does not necessarily imply that the rendering of account affects authority. After all, whether it does is an empirical question.

Since the body of public administration literature that has been analysed in the current study provides no ready-made theoretical framework that suits these conditions, this section develops an alternative theoretical framework that finds its origins in the work of Friedrich (1972) and Hay (2007). In this way a 'candidate-theory' (Eckstein, 1975) is developed of how the rendering of account may influence authority, which hinges on the idea of congruence between the way in which local leaders render account and the expectations that accountees have thereof. It takes a social exchange perspective on authority, studying the interaction between accountees' expectations and the rendering of account by accountors (see Hernandez *et al.*, 2011, p. 1171).

In order to constitute authority, a leader's reasoning must appeal to his followers' values and belief systems (see Section 2.2.1). But, since accountees' values, beliefs, and the expectations these give rise to can be expected to be neither consistent nor universal, the theoretical perspective this study adopts is one that takes contextual dependency as its starting point. At its centre lies the idea of compatibility between accountees' expectations of the rendering of account by the accountant, both in terms of process and argumentation, and the actual rendering of account by the accountant. As such, it starts with the idea of congruence between the 'demand side' of the accountees, that is, the expectations and evaluative standards held by the accountees, and the 'supply side' of the accountant, that is, how the accountant renders account (see also Hay, 2007). The main postulate is that the rendering of account contributes to a leader's authority when it is congruent with the prior expectations held by the accountees and/or the evaluative standards applied by them following the rendering of account (see Shapiro *et al.*, 1994). Conversely, it is held that if the two are incongruent, the rendering of account harms a leader's authority. The empirical chapters, therefore, examine both accountees' expectations and the rendering of account by the political-executive leaders involved and compare the two to see whether there is congruence between them to the extent that it has contributed to the leaders' authority.

This conception of the relationship between the rendering of account and authority rests on the presumption that the relationship between governmental actors and citizens is one in which there is a need for congruence between citizens' demands and government's actions. This is of course a normative ideal with quite a long intellectual history, going back to the very first political-philosophical theory building on democratic governance. A multitude of different scholars, coming from a wide range of scientific disciplines, have discussed different aspects of this basic idea. Commonly they use terms such as 'legitimacy' (e.g., Dahl, Easton, Scharpf, Weber) or 'responsiveness' (Page, 1994; Stivers, 1994; Fenger *et al.*, 2011).

However, whereas the questions whether governments' conduct is legitimate or responsive are of course closely related to the question of authority, these three questions focus on different aspects of the relationship between citizens and government. Without getting bogged down in extensive conceptual demarcation, one could say that other than 'authority', the concept of legitimacy focuses on the normative acceptability of government conduct in the same way as the concept of 'responsiveness' focuses on the empirical overlap between the results of government conduct and citizens' wishes and demands and/or value patterns (see Grafstein, 1981; see also Stillman, 1974; Scharpf, 1999). 'Specific authority', as the concept is used in the current study, by contrast, focuses on followers' attitudes to leaders' concrete decisions, that is, on them 'having authority' rather than on them 'being in authority'. The latter is more of a question of legitimacy because it is primarily an institutional one that plays

less attention to the active and continuous 'production' of authority of a leader by his followers (see also Hajer, 2009, pp. 19-23). As perceived here, authority requires continuous reconfirmation, which is attained through the recognition of one's authority by one's followers, which, in turn, occurs when followers affirm the reasonableness of a leader's decision (see also Section 2.2). In that, the congruence between accountees' accountability demands and an accountant's rendering of account is the primary constitutive element.

To be more precise, the idea of 'congruence' (see also Stillman, 1974, p. 34; Fenger *et al.*, 2011, p. 13) between the supply and demand sides does not entail the requirement of an exact fit between accountees' values, beliefs, expectations, and demands on the one hand, and the rendering of account by the accountant on the other. This is because the former are often implicit and imprecise, and may even have been formulated *ex post*. Rather, 'congruence' requires that the rendering of account in the eyes of citizens provides a satisfactory answer to their accountability demands. It is thus conceptualised as the adequacy of the rendering of account by the accountant as perceived by the accountees (see Shapiro *et al.*, 1994). Such a conception of the fit between supply and demand amounts to more than just compatibility (compare Stillman, 1974, p. 39) or consistency because it entails a constructive aspect through which authority is established and that exceeds the mere idea of 'non-conflicting coexistence'.

To sum up, this section proposes the candidate-theory that political-executives can (re)generate authority, that is, convince accountors of the reasonableness of their decisions, through the rendering of account. It postulates that accountors can create public understanding for their decisions through rendering account in a way that appeals to accountees' values and belief systems and that honours their accountability demands to the extent that there is congruence between accountees' accountability demands and an accountant's rendering of account.

3

Analysing and assessing accountability strategies

The accountability of public leaders, which was conceptualised in the previous chapter, is generally perceived as one of the cornerstone principles of contemporary Western European democracy, or in fact democracy as such. ‘The people’ need to be able to hold those that are in power to account so as to prevent them from abusing the power they have been granted in their name. Accountability mechanisms are designed to enable the public to exercise ‘ultimate control’ over its leaders (Mulgan, 2003, p. 1). Therefore, it is argued in the literature, executive politicians have an aversion to their own accountability. This assumption, which is elaborated in Section 3.1, holds that public leaders dislike and will avert the external control that is imbedded in accountability mechanisms. However, if accountability mechanisms can function as channels through which political-executive leaders can attain authority, which is one of the main postulates posed in Chapter 2, this assumption may be false. In that case, political-executive leaders may see accountability as an opportunity to attain authority, making it less likely that they will disfavour it. They may even appreciate being accountable. This chapter elaborates on this line of reasoning, provides empirical support for it, and develops an analytical framework that is used to analyse local political-executives’ accountability strategies in the empirical chapters that follow.

3.1 Alleged political aversion to accountability

According to the ‘politics of accountability theory’, “political representatives, appointed officials, administrators and workers have good reasons to resist attempts at exposing their work to scrutiny (...). Their interests in organisational stability, budget maximisation and the promotion of favourable image, contribute to a general desire to oppose accountability mechanisms that might portray deficiencies in their work” (Schwartz & Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 2002, pp. 212-213; see also Newell & Wheeler, 2006). This would lead political-executives to avoid accountability. Assumptions such as these are held by many. Van Gunsteren (1999, p. 17), for example, claims that politicians portray an aversion to accountability. Likewise, executive politicians are not seldom accused of avoiding accountability, and accountability mechanisms are often characterised as being a burden to them (see Bovens & ‘t Hart, 2005).

Propositions such as these rest on a popular perspective on accountability in which accountability relationships are conceived as relationships between ‘principals’ and

'agents'. The accountant, i.e., the agent, is said to be accountable to the accountee, i.e., the principal. In representative democracies there is, for example, an accountability relationship between the executive and the representative council. In this relationship, the council, the principal, has delegated authority to the executive, the agent, and the latter is accountable to the former. At the same time there is an accountability relationship between citizens as principals and representatives as agents. Several scholars have analysed public accountability relationships with the help of principal/agent theories (Strøm, 2000, pp. 267-268; Broadbent & Laughlin, 2003; Nyman, Nilsson & Rapp, 2005; Bovens, 2007, p. 455; Kluvers & Tippet, 2010). According to Philp (2009, p. 29) this is a common trend in the literature on democratic accountability. Granted, several authors at the same time recognise that not all accountability relationships are of this nature (e.g., Bovens, 2007, p. 451).

According to principal/agent theories, "[a]ny delegation of authority creates the risk that the agent may not faithfully pursue the interests of the principal" (Strøm, 2000, p. 270). This creates what is called 'agency problems', such as an agent's failure to act in the best interest of the principal. To combat such problems, accountability mechanisms can be established. The result is 'a corresponding chain of accountability mechanisms' that mirrors the chain of delegation, but that runs in the opposite direction (Strøm, 2000, p. 267; see also Section 1.4). Each link in the chain of delegation between citizens, representatives, and executives is accompanied by an inverse accountability mechanism that is designed to counteract agency problems. Seen from this perspective, accountability relationships are primarily designed to limit "the degree of discretion exercised by those in public office" (Philp, 2009, p. 29), that is, "to ensure behavioural compliance by the agent" (Broadbent & Laughlin, 2003, p. 26). The principal's control over the agent becomes one of the main aspects of accountability, which makes it likely that accountors will avoid accountability.

However, political accountability, in contrast to managerial accountability, is generally not about direct control by the principal over the agent's conduct (Romzek & Dubnick, 1987; Broadbent & Laughlin, 2003, p. 24; Philp, 2009, p. 40). The direct control of citizens over their representatives is rather limited, as is representatives' control over the executive. Political decision-makers are often granted a particular level of autonomy. Their actions cannot be controlled in detail. Moreover, this is not the primary aim of the political accountability mechanisms that are in place. Public accountability mechanisms have other goals than establishing tight control (see also Bovens *et al.*, 2008). In local politics, external scrutiny has other goals and effects than portraying deficiencies in the executives' work alone. Some of these effects may even be beneficial to the executives themselves in terms of creating room for leadership and attaining authority (see Sections 3.2 and 3.3). This is one of the reasons why principal/agent theories may be less applicable to the political realm, as Philp (2009) argues.

It also casts doubt on the aforementioned ‘politics of accountability theory’ because it challenges the assumption that political decision-makers have a general desire to oppose accountability mechanisms.

3.2 Accountability-seeking leadership in practice

The empirical adequacy of the theoretical assumption that executive politicians have an aversion to their own accountability is, indeed, considered to be rather low. Studies have shown that political-executive leaders hold an interest in improving their own accountability (Schwartz & Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 2002, p. 213ff; also Bovens & Schillemans, 2009, p. 32). The interviews conducted for this study confirm these findings: local political leaders were often motivated to render account for their conduct. Consider the following quote from a district executive:

You have to render account for such decisions independent of whether someone accepts them or not. (...) Although residents have not elected me as an executive, they are confronted with my decisions, which sometimes are displeasing to them. Those directly involved have the right to learn from me why we, the executive, believe that we can make such a decision.

(Informant 12, district executive)

This executive believes that neighbourhood residents have the right to be rendered account to, despite whether or not he is being held to account by them. This conviction provides him an impetus to render account. He feels a moral obligation to render account.

Now consider the following quote from an alderman:

One may look at the development of accountability practices from a Machiavellian perspective in that it grinds the sharp edges of potential social resistance. (...) For me this Machiavellian perspective is an everyday truth, but I would not say that in public, of course.

(Informant 1, alderman)

This alderman suggests that the rendering of account lessens social opposition. Explaining and justifying a decision may thus be in the interest of the accountor himself, which provides a stimulus for rendering account to the accountee.

It may be questioned whether explaining and justifying the decision in this case qualify as accountability activities since they do not immediately originate from an

obligation to render account. However, such an obligation still exists because there is a political accountability relationship between political-executives and citizens. In addition, the alderman may perceive a self-imposed obligation to reduce social opposition and may believe that out of that follows an obligation to render account. Furthermore, here too the explanation and justification of a decision are involved within the context of the political accountability relationship between the alderman and citizens. Therefore, there seems to be little to no reason not to speak of the rendering of account in cases like these, even though the accountant may not be called to account. Accountants may render account in anticipation of being called to account, or even in order to prevent being called to account in public. For this reason, it seems more appropriate to speak of the 'proactive rendering of account' in this case, rather than not speak of the rendering of account at all.

Local executives have often internalised the expectation that they render account. Consider: "If you take on the responsibility to make the location decision, you also have to render account for it" (Informant 3, alderman), and "It is important to render account, to explain how you arrived at your decision" (Informant 12, district executive). These are examples of local executives willing to 'render account'. One may suggest that this is still not the same as local executives wishing to 'be accountable'. After all, the previous chapter has emphasised the importance of this distinction throughout. But, there is also empirical evidence that suggests that local executives do indeed want to be accountable to different accountees. Informant 9, a district executive, stressed, for example, the importance of his 'executive accountability'. He wanted to be accountable to citizens as well as to the District Council. There may or there may not be Machiavellian motives behind this, but that does not take away the fact that accountants, *in casu* local political-executives, show an interest in their own accountability.

Executives' willingness to render account is more than an empty gesture. They often materialise it. Numerous examples can be found of (local) executives introducing new and additional accountability arrangements. The Rotterdam 'accountability day' mentioned earlier is just one example. Other local governments organise 'accountability debates' with citizens in relation to their financial reports. Similarly, the mayor of the Dutch municipality of Zeist invited a citizen panel to conduct a performance interview with him, the results of which were published (Albeda, 2010, p. 13). Others use new media such as Twitter as channels through which they render account to the general public (see, e.g., Kuiper, 2009). American president Barack Obama's *Recovery.gov*, a website through which the American government pursues "greater accountability and transparency in the use of funds" (Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, 2010), provides another well-known example (see Cels, Van Twist, De Jong & Karré, 2010).

In conclusion, ‘accountability-seeking leadership’ can be observed, to paraphrase ‘t Hart (2005, p. 236). As Broadbent and Laughlin (2003, p. 23) argue, “governments make themselves accountable”. Hence, the distinction made by Goetz and Jenkins (2004) between ‘accountability seekers’ and ‘accountability providers’ is somewhat misleading because those who provide accountability (the accountors) sometimes also seek it. Like their accountees, political-executive leaders often seek their own accountability. The conclusion is justified that political-executive leaders, at least on some occasions, display a willingness to render account for their conduct, or maybe even a tendency or propensity to do so.

The English language lacks the linguistic tools to fully grasp this idea of a willingness to render account, because it knows no direct equivalent for what in Germanic languages is called *Verantwortung*, which can roughly be translated as ‘the rendering of account’ (see also Bovens, 1998, p. 23; 2005, p. 204). Following the Germanic tradition, one could say that executives sometimes display *Verantwortungsbereitschaft*, that is, a willingness to render account, or even *Verantwortungsfreudigkeit*, that is, a propensity to render account. Unfortunately, the use of these terms in the context of accountability might be considered as a misuse of the German language since *Verantwortungsbereitschaft* and *Verantwortungsfreudigkeit*, paradoxically, are generally used to refer to an actor’s willingness to take on responsibility and not to the willingness to render account. Therefore, the Dutch equivalent of *Verantwortungsbereitschaft* is used here to describe an actor’s willingness to render account: *verantwoordingsbereid(heid)*, notwithstanding the fact that it does not fully grasp the concept of *Verantwortungsfreudigkeit*.

The use of this term is well embedded in the Dutch discourse on accountability. For example, it appears in the Netherlands Code for Good Public Governance, issued by the Dutch Ministry of the Interior (2009, p. 9), as one of the seven principles of proper public administration, which in English reads: “The executive body is prepared to render an account of itself to stakeholders, regularly and willingly.” It also plays a prominent role in calls for directive leadership (e.g., Melkert, in Nicolassen, 1999): “Politicians must be willing (...) to render account continuously.”

3.3 The nature of accountability-seeking leadership

Unfortunately, the number of studies that have examined the drivers behind accountability-seeking leadership, its forms, its manifestations, and the implications thereof for the practice of public accountability so far is rather limited. Whereas it is broadly recognised that the practice of accountability is established in interaction between accountees and accountors (Behn, 2001; Flinders, 2001; Mulgan, 2003; Sullivan, 2003, p. 354; Dowdle, 2006a; Bovens, 2007; Brandsma & Schillemans, forthcoming 2013), the

influence of accountors on the design and functioning of accountability mechanisms has so far received little attention. Therefore, this study set out to gain a better understanding of how accountors, *in casu* local political-executive leaders, shape the formal and informal characteristics of the accountability arrangements they operate within. The Chapters 5 through to 11 go into the empirical findings, but before doing so the next sections develop a conceptual model of accountability strategies that is used to structure the empirical analysis.

3.3.1 Drivers behind accountability-seeking leadership

The previous section not only showed that political-executive leaders sometimes seek their own accountability, but also that there are several, distinguishable motives to be found behind their 'quest for accountability'. Different sets of motives can be envisioned. In this thesis six sets are distinguished, which are exemplified below.

First, political-executive leaders may be convinced that the council, citizens, and others have a democratic right to hold them to account and a right to be rendered account to. Leaders may seek accountability to accommodate these rights. Such political leaders present themselves as deontologists: their willingness to render account stems from the conviction that, as a rule, it is their democratic duty to be accountable and to render account. Their motives belong to the category of *democratic motives*. Executives may render account because they believe that it is right to do so. Such motives closely correlate with the democratic perspective on accountability of Bovens *et al.* (2008, pp. 230-231), according to which the aim of accountability is to facilitate citizens' control over elected representatives and, indirectly, executives.

The same goes for the second set of motives, which belong to the category of *learning motives* (Bovens *et al.*, 2008, p. 232). Local executives, just as well as citizens and other accountees, may be interested in maintaining or improving government effectiveness. Accountability mechanisms can contribute to this because they provide political-executive leaders with the necessary feedback from different stakeholders (see also Behn, 2001).

The rendering of account and the search for enhanced accountability could also be the result of *socio-cultural motives* accountors may have. In democratic societies, accountability may perform a socio-cultural function, in addition to a political-democratic one. The rendering of account may contribute to forming executives' (social) identity. Executives may have incorporated into their Selves the expectation to render account, which is associated with their role in the socio-political community (see Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 225ff). They may render account because they are expected to do so. Such postulates can be traced back to identity theory, social identity theory, and symbolic interactionism (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995; see also Hernandez *et al.*, 2011, p. 1173). In

addition, the rendering of account may have become a ritual or have attained more of a symbolic function.

Fourth, the rendering of account may perform more *psycho-social* functions for individual accountors. Local executives may, for example, place an interest in the external recognition of the justifiability of a decision by accountees. The rendering of account can provide mechanisms to achieve such recognition. Similarly, political leaders may place intrinsic value on rendering account for their conduct. If scholars such as Barry (1989, pp. 284-289) and Scanlon (1982) are right that human beings share a non-instrumental desire to defend their actions to others, it would be very natural for political-executive leaders to want to explain and justify their conduct (also S. Freeman, 1991; for a critical analysis of this claim see Moore, 1996, pp. 170-172). Executive leaders may exhibit a tendency to justify their actions to others, simply because of their propensity to do so, independent from being called to account.

Fifth, one can envision several *political-strategic motives* that drive accountors to seek accountability and to render account. Rendering account may, for example, recruit support for decisions among citizens and others that is necessary to implement these decisions (Bovens & Schillemans, 2009, p. 32; also Black, 2008, p. 151). Likewise, the rendering of account may prevent negative sanctions from being imposed or promote the use of positive sanctions, depending on the accountees' judgements. Note that such motives differ from the deontological ones in the category of democratic motives. In the case of the latter, the executives render account because they believe it is right to do so, whereas in the case of the former executives render account because they believe that it will be to their advantage.

Sixth and last, accountors may render account in order to comply with the requirements placed on them by accountees. This last motive best fits the traditional perspective on accountability in which external control is the constituting element of accountability relationships. Accountors are confronted with obligations that they are expected to honour and accountees may have the power to force accountors to comply (see Philp, 2009, p. 32). Such forces may provide a motive for rendering account. Other than the five aforementioned motives, which are mainly intrinsic, this sixth motive is mainly an extrinsic one. When the sixth motive comes into play, the balance of power has shifted to the accountee. Local executives may have internalised such *compliance motives* in such a way that they overlap with the fifth motive (e.g., avoiding negative sanctions by complying) or the fourth motive (having a desire to comply), but it can also be a motive that, to a large extent, is unconnected to the others in the sense that accountors can be required to render account by accountees and that this has nothing to do with their own intrinsic motives.

By focusing on the accountability strategies of local political-executives, this thesis puts the latter two motives at the forefront of the analysis. It suggests that there is an

under-explored strategic element to the way in which local political-executives render account, and that the rendering of account can purposely be used to regain authority when it is challenged. This focus resonates the way in which the political-executive Informants perceived their accountability, who spoke of the 'Machiavellian' aspects of the rendering of account (see Section 3.2) and the 'pragmatic perspective on accountability', in contrast to the normative or ideological perspectives on accountability (compare Black, 2008, p. 151).

The strategic element of accountability

To get to grips with this matter the current study uses the term 'accountability strategy' to refer to patterns in the way in which accountors render account. For ease of readability, the term 'accountability strategies' is used to cover the areas of both 'accountability' and 'rendering account' that were distinguished in Chapter 2. That is, it covers how local executives influence accountability relationships as well as how they explain and justify their conduct.

There is, of course, an epistemological issue here since the use of the term 'strategy' implies a means-end logic that presupposes intentionality (Chia & Rasche, 2010, pp. 34-36). But, when rendering account, political-executives might not act purposefully to obtain pre-specified goals in that sense. The current study has not analysed whether political-executives intentionally rendered account in specific ways because it is sceptical of the social sciences' ability to validly and reliably establish actors' intentions (see also Schein, 1977). Alternatively, a behaviouristic approach to the study of accountability strategies was taken. The analysis focused on actions, on the concrete conduct of political-executives. The term 'strategy' is used here as a category that describes the behaviour of political-executives, as a description of repertoires. The strategy is thus something that is ascribed to the specific behaviour of the executives by the researcher. At the same time, when rendering account, at least some of the political-executives that were interviewed acted strategically in the literal sense of the word (see Section 3.2). This seems to justify the use of the term 'strategy' and the ascription of strategy more generally.

One assumption remains and that is of course that rendering account involves agency, i.e., that individual leaders can make a difference as regards the way in which they render account. At the same time this study also recognises that accountors operate within the confines of existing accountability mechanisms and arrangements. Furthermore, accountees also influence how the practice of accountability comes about. Thus, public leaders' accountability activities do not take place in complete freedom, nor are they fully determined by external factors (Bondel, 1987, pp. 4-5; Hernandez *et al.*, 2011). Not only is there interaction between different actors, but also between institutions

and conduct. Within these processes, the accountability strategies of accountors are important because they shape the practice of accountability, it is proposed.

For ease of readability, this study prefers the term ‘accountability strategy’ to terms that might more accurately represent the basic idea behind the term, which is that accountors make choices in the way in which they render account for their conduct, such as ‘strategies in rendering account’.

3.4 An analytical framework for accountability strategies

So far, the previous sections have mainly spoken about accountors’ search for ‘accountability’ similar to how a number of scholars have pointed out there is a greater demand for public ‘accountability’ in recent years (e.g., Mulgan, 2003, pp. 1-2; Jos & Tompkins, 2004, p. 255; Melo & Baiocchi, 2006, pp. 594-595). However, citizens and others are not so much asking for more accountability, but rather for different kinds of accountability (Romzek, 2000; see also Section 1.5). Likewise, local political-executive leaders look for particular kinds of accountability and particular accountability mechanisms rather than for accountability as such. Executives look for particular ways to render account (e.g., Broadbent & Laughlin, 2003) and have different perspectives on what accountability is and how it operates. These may not necessarily fit the traditional model of accountability in representative democracies. Consider: “Local executives do not see their accountability [in relation to citizens, NK] as running through the mechanisms of the representative democracy” (Informant 23, senior administrator; also Informant 19, district councillor). Therefore, an analytical framework is needed that distinguishes between different types of accountability and different accountability mechanisms.

3.4.1 Dimensions of accountability strategies

This study distinguishes six dimensions of accountability strategies, which is two more than the influential model of accountability developed by Mulgan (2003, p. 22; see also Dowdle, 2006b; Bovens, 2007), which it is primarily based upon:

- a) Addressor: *who* renders account?
- b) Addressee: *to whom* does the accountor render account?
- c) Conduct: *for what* does the accountor render account?
- d) Justification: *with what arguments* does the accountor render account?
- e) Mechanisms: *how* does the accountor render account?
- f) Timing: *when* does the accountor render account?

This model of accountability strategies differs from Mulgan's model in two respects. First, it focuses on the actual act of rendering account by accountors, the rendering of account in the sense of practices, as opposed to the 'accountability' of accountors. This adaptation is closely related to this study's focus on the rendering of account as a communicative practice, rather than on the institutional framework of accountability (see Chapter 2).

Second, Mulgan's model distinguishes only the dimensions a), b), c), and e). The current study adds two dimensions: a substantive dimension and a dimension of timing. This is because the empirical analysis shows that the types of arguments that are used and the timing of acts of rendering account are sometimes crucial for regaining authority for directive conduct (Karsten, 2012; see also Chapters 5 through to 12). Current frameworks that are available for the analysis of accountability relationships run the risk of overlooking these aspects of accountability strategies (compare Mulgan, 2003; Bovens, 2007).

Table 9 identifies the aspects of these dimensions that will be used to characterise the accountability strategies of local executives. Most categorisations are based upon existing conceptual frameworks and have been adapted to fit the perspective of the current research, that is, the perspective of the accountor, rather than that of the accountee. Other categorisations have been derived from the empirical analysis inductively, which illustrates the iterative approach to the relation between theory and empirical data that was taken for this study (see also Section 4.5).

Table 9. Dimensions and characteristics of accountability strategies

Dimension	Aspect	Categories	Source
A) Addressor	A) All for one, or one for all	Individual	(Bovens, 2007, pp. 457-459; Mulgan, 2003, p. 23)
		Collective	
B) Addressee	B1) Nature of the forum	Political accountability	(Bovens, 2007, pp. 455-457; Romzek, 2000; Mulgan, 2003, pp. 30-31)
		Social accountability	
		Media accountability	
	B2) Composition of the forum	Heterogeneous views	(Friedrich, 1972; Lerner & Tetlock, 1999)
		Homogeneous views	
	B3) Quality of the dialogue	Proper conversation	Case studies
		Not a proper conversation	
C) Conduct	C) Type of conduct	Siting	(Gordon & Jasper, 1996) and case studies
		Choice	
		Process	
D) Justification	D) Type of arguments	Technical argumentation	(Fischer, 2003)
		Situational argumentation	
		Societal argumentation	
		Ideological argumentation	

Table 9. Dimensions and characteristics of accountability strategies (*continued*)

Dimension	Aspect	Categories	Source
E) Mechanisms	E1) Type of mechanisms	Formal	(Considine, 2002; Bovens, 2007)
		Informal	
	E2) Nature of the contact between accountant and accountee	Direct Indirect	(Meijer, 2005; Meijer & Schillemans, 2009)
F) Timing	F) Timing in relation to being called to account	Proactive	(K. P. Kearns, 1996)
		Reactive	

A) Addressor

The first dimension of accountability strategies concerns the nature of the accountant: who is it that renders account? Since this study focuses on local political-executives only and the nature of the accountant is stable throughout the study, the core aspect of this question, that is, 'What is the nature of the accountant?', is less relevant for the current study. One aspect remains apparently relevant, though: all for one, or one for all?

As regards the rendering of account by a municipal executive board, an important question is: does the executive board render account as a collective, or do political-executives position themselves as the main accountors individually (see also Mulgan, 2003, p. 23)? This is an important question since the academic literature claims that collective responsibility complicates the issue of accountability (e.g., Strøm, 2000, p. 267). It gains further importance in a context of collegial governance. An additional aspect of this dimension is whether or not political-executives position themselves as the main political accountors, as distinct from other actors that are involved in the decision-making, such as local bureaucrats and care agencies.

B) Addressee

The second dimension of accountability strategies concerns the nature of the addressee. Three aspects are distinguished here: what is the nature of the forum, how is the forum composed in terms of the values and belief systems, and what is the forum size?

B1) Nature of the forum

The first aspect of the second dimension of accountability strategies concerns the nature of the forum, or forums, to which an accountant renders account. Several leading authors in the field of accountability have developed typologies of such 'types of accountability', using a variety of criteria (e.g., Day & Klein, 1987; Romzek, 2000; Bovens, 2007, pp. 455-457; Mulgan, 2003, pp. 30-31). The type of accountability this thesis focuses on is generally identified as 'political accountability', that is, the accountability to political actors.

Political-executives' accountability to representative councils is of course the most evident example because the latter is a truly political body that acts under the accountability regime of the representative democracy. The second main political accountee is the citizen, or groups of citizens. As part of the electorate, they too are political actors who act under the same accountability regime of the representative democracy (see Section 1.4). The accountability relationship between citizens and political-executives in essence is a political one: the forum consists of members of the sovereign *demos* that have transferred decision-making power to the political-executives via the council, and at the same time are subjects of political decision-making.

Alternatively, it could be argued that the accountability relationship between political-executives and citizens is a kind of social accountability (see Bovens, 2007, p. 457) since the citizens involved in this study acted as neighbourhood residents, as stakeholders, rather than as voters. Further support for this distinction was found in the uneasiness that many councillors experienced when they visited public meetings in which political-executives rendered account to neighbourhood residents. They felt out of place as political actors in a socio-political forum, and recognised that they evaluated the location decisions from a different perspective than neighbourhood residents (e.g., Informants 79 & 80, councillors; also councillor Vos, in Municipality of The Hague, 2008g; compare Leefbaar Rotterdam, 2009). The political forum of the council thus is substantially different from that of neighbourhood residents.

This line of reasoning is exploited here to distinguish between a 'political orientation' in the rendering of account (i.e., focusing on the Municipal Council and individual councillors) and a 'social orientation' in the rendering of account (i.e., focusing on neighbourhood residents and residents' associations). It is, however, acknowledged that both types of actors are essentially political because the board-citizens accountability relationship is a political one in the sense that it deals with accountability for political decisions (see Section 2.1). The same goes for the accountability relationship between political-executives and the media, which can also be perceived as a form of political accountability (Bovens, 2007, p. 455) since the media have a political role in scrutinising executives' decisions. Nevertheless, a separate media orientation is distinguished here to be able to analyse whether executives render account to citizens directly or through the media, and whether executives render account to the media as autonomous forums.

Other types of accountability that have been distinguished by others, such as legal accountability, administrative accountability, managerial accountability, and professional accountability are not at the core of this thesis because this is not where the question of specific political authority as it is perceived in this study comes in. They are therefore not included in the categorisation. When they do come up in the case studies, they are mentioned in the respective chapters, though.

One might object to leaving legal accountability out of the analysis since location decisions generally have a strong legal dimension: neighbourhood residents very often engage in legal procedures to prevent human service facilities from being established, and because both Dutch and Flemish governments have the legal duty to motivate their decisions to change zoning schemes or to issue building permits (*motiveringsbe-ginsel*). The decision to leave out the legal aspect nonetheless, was motivated by two considerations. First, the location decisions that are at the focal point of this thesis often do not qualify for formal objection and appeal procedures. Political-executives often pick locations that fit existing zoning schemes, which renders formal objections not admissible. Objections and appeals can be filed against revisions of zoning schemes or building permits, if required, but not against the location decisions as such. The location decisions local executives made and that this thesis focused on were of a political nature rather than of a legal one. The location decisions as such had no legal consequences, but were primarily political instruments (see Chapter 11). This is why a focus on political accountability was more apt.

Second, in the perception of both accountors and accountees the question of authority was of a political nature, rather than of a legal nature: the authority of political-executives was not fought over in court. Formal objection and appeal procedures were described by Informants as something that took place in ‘another theatre’ (Informant 72, neighbourhood resident), or constituted ‘another battle’ (Informant 20, neighbourhood resident). Neighbourhood residents filed objections to get zoning schemes or building permits changed while recognising the reasonableness of the location decision at the same time and *vice versa*. The two questions are, thus, inter-related but essentially different. Formal objections only form a proxy for a challenge to political authority. For this reason legal accountability was excluded from the analysis, notwithstanding the fact that perceptions of the reasonableness of the location decisions were also input for legal procedures.

B2) Composition of the forum

The second aspect of the accountee dimension of accountability strategies concerns the composition of the forums to which account is rendered, not in terms of their nature, but in terms of the variety of norms and values they represent. This is because perceptions of reasonableness depend on the value preferences and belief systems of accountees (Friedrich, 1972, pp. 61-65).

Lerner and Tetlock (1999) have shown that from the perspective of the accountee accountability is more effective when the forum consists of a variety of views that are unknown to the accountor since it fosters self-criticism of the decision-maker. Conversely, it is in the interest of the accountor to have to render account to a known audience with homogeneous views. The case studies showed that political-executives

attuned their accounts to their audiences, that they found heterogeneous forums more difficult to deal with, and that some tried to separate different types of audiences in an attempt to be more effective when rendering account in terms of regaining authority. 'Choosing' one's audience is thus an important aspect of accountability strategies, particularly in terms of the homogeneity of the views of the different members of a forum.

B3) Quality of the dialogue

A third aspect of the accountee dimension of accountability strategies is forum size. It was seen that political-executives could only render account to neighbourhood residents effectively when the number of attendees was not too large. It is, however, very difficult to attach a numerical value to this criterion. Some Informants spoke of a maximum of 50, others 15, and yet others suggested that only one-on-one conversations were effective in truly explaining one's considerations and answering questions. Although the numerical aspect was very relevant here, it seems that the criterion accountors employed was whether the setting allowed for having a proper conversation or not, in the sense that accountees had the opportunity to pose their evaluative questions and accountors were able to explain and justify their considerations. Therefore, the quality of the conversation is used in the analysis as the operationalisation of this aspect of accountability strategies.

C) Nature of the conduct

The third dimension of accountability strategies concerns the nature of the conduct: what is it that an accountor renders account for? Several scholars have developed typologies in an attempt to come to grips with the answer to the question 'What is it that an accountor renders account for?' (e.g., Day & Klein, 1987; Mulgan, 2003, pp. 30-31; Bovens, 2007, pp. 459-460). Behn (2001), for example, distinguishes accountability for finances, fairness (or process), and performance. Such distinctions do not directly apply here, though, since this thesis focuses exclusively on the rendering of account for a particular decision, or 'particular accountability': the location decision for human service facilities, which was solely about 'performance' in Behn's terms, or 'content' in Day and Klein's terms. At the same time political-executives did focus on different aspects of the location decisions in the rendering of account. Based on the case studies, a threefold distinction was made between rendering account for a) the siting of a facility as such, b) the choice between different locations in a comparative sense, and c) the way in which the location decision was made (see Chapter 11).

D) Type of justification

The fourth dimension of accountability strategies concerns the type of arguments political-executives use when rendering account for their location decisions. This aspect

refers to the nature of the argument that is used in rendering account for the different aspects of the location decisions, or, in Fischer's (2003) terms, the type of discourse a political-executive participates in. This aspect of accountability strategies identifies which arguments a political-executive uses to explain and justify the location decision. It draws from the study of rhetoric, analysing the different types of responses accountors produce, though it looks only at the substantive aspect thereof.

Based on the work of Fischer, four categories of arguments are distinguished: a) technical argumentation, b) situational argumentation, c) societal argumentation, and d) ideological argumentation. The first category refers to arguments that call upon the technical aspects of location decisions, such as availability, suitability, and size of a property, building requirements, and environmental laws. The second category refers to arguments that call upon the situational context, that is, arguments that refer to the unique circumstances of the location decision, such as referring to a limited budget or choosing the only available location. The third category refers to arguments that call upon the valuable societal consequences of a location decision, such as locating a facility in a residential estate because this is best for the facility's clientele. The fourth category refers to arguments that call upon abstract normative values like equality of justice, such as the argument that every part of a city should contribute to solving homelessness by housing its 'fair share' of facilities (see, e.g., Rose, 1993; Gaber, 1996, p. 662ff; Karsten, 2010), or the argument that every homeless person has the right to be sheltered in a residential estate.

This substantive 'How?' question, that is, 'With what arguments do political-executives explain and justify the location decision?', should not be mistaken for the procedural question of how, or through which accountability mechanisms political-executives render account for their location decisions, which constitutes the next dimension.

E) Mechanisms

The fifth dimension of accountability strategies concerns the nature of the mechanisms through which a political-executive renders account. Two aspects are distinguished here: the type of mechanism and the nature of the contact between the accountor and the accountee.

E1) *Type of mechanism*

When political-executives render account for location decisions to different accountees, they can do so through a variety of mechanisms, that is, through a variety of channels of communication. Such mechanisms can be of a formal nature, such as council meetings or letters to the council, but also of a more informal nature, for instance, talks in the corridors of city hall.

Admittedly, this formal versus informal distinction is a rather crude one since many accountability mechanisms fall in between those two categories. Consider, for example, letters to neighbourhood residents, which are not formally required, but are publicly accessible and are considered to be official ways of communication. The analytic distinction is deployed, nevertheless, to distinguish orientations towards informal mechanisms from orientations towards formal mechanisms.

E2) Nature of the contact between accountor and accountee

The second aspect of the mechanisms dimension is whether the contact between the accountor and accountee is of a direct, or of an indirect nature. This question is particularly relevant in the executive-citizens accountability relationship. In the traditional accountability regime of the representative democracy the main accountability mechanism in this relationship is an indirect one because it is mediated by the representative council (see Chapter 1, and Strøm, 2000). However, the direct rendering of account by political-executives to citizens has become more important over the last decades (Meijer, 2005; Meijer & Schillemans, 2009). As part of their accountability strategies, political-executives may choose to render account to citizens directly through various communication channels, or, alternatively, refer them to the Municipal Council, that is, to indirect accountability mechanisms.

F) Timing

The sixth dimension of accountability strategies concerns timing: when do political-executives render account? This dimension has been added to existing models of accountability, but draws from the work of Kearns (1996). Only one main aspect was identified here: the timing of the rendering of account in relation to being called to account.

The fact that 'being called to account' is the core sense of accountability and that accountability is retrospective in operation (Mulgan, 2000, 2003), does not mean that accountors must wait until they are called to account before they render account. Accountors may anticipate evaluative questions from accountees and try to answer those proactively, rather than reactively, that is, after they have been asked. The case studies show that the proactive rendering of account is generally more effective in terms of rendering account than the reactive rendering of account. Therefore, a timing dimension of accountability strategies is included in this analytical framework. In Chapter 11 two additional aspects of timing are identified that proved relevant, but that were found to be of less significance. For ease of readability they are not included in the analytical framework as separate aspects.

The accountability strategies of political-executives may vary along each of the foregoing dimensions. They can be considered to be ‘first order’ characteristics of accountability strategies because they are characterisations of the accountability strategies as such. Each characteristic gives an answer to the question, ‘What does a political-executive focus on in and when rendering account, given the obligations he has and the expectations of the accountees?’.

3.4.2 First and second order accountability strategies

Moving up a step in the level of analysis, two types of accountability strategies can be differentiated. The first concerns operating within existing accountability mechanisms, the second concerns shaping the architecture of those mechanisms. They are referred to, respectively, as ‘first order’ and ‘second order’ accountability strategies. This is of course a rather crude distinction since in practice the design and functioning of accountability cannot always be separated with ease. Between the two an iterative relation exists. Nevertheless, such a distinction has an analytic value because it separates two lines along which accountability strategies can be developed that are of a different nature.

‘Playing the system’: establishing new ways of working within existing mechanisms

First, political-executive leaders have considerable discretion in the way they act within existing accountability arrangements. That is, how they operate within the confines of the mechanisms that are in place to provide for the rendering of account. To say it irreverently: executives can ‘play the system’. Executive leaders can intentionally use their discretion to render account in particular ways, rather than in others. Even when an accountability arrangement has been established, the actual practice of rendering account will not be fully determined because the arrangements do not tell political-executive leaders in full detail how and when to explain and justify their actions. The arrangement, the formal or informal social relationship between actor and forum, only ‘sets the stage’; the actual practice of accountability still has to be established in the social interaction between actor and forum (Van Montfort, 2001; Schillemans, 2007, p. 78ff). Executive leaders themselves may shape the practice of accountability by responding (proactively or reactively) to these demands in particular ways, if at all. Local political-executive leaders in search of authority may thus develop particular ‘ways of working’ within existing accountability arrangements. As such, contrary to what Haus and Sweeting (2006, p. 274) argue, a focus on accountability does not require a focus on “the (formal) institutional mechanisms of local democracy”.

So far, only a few scholars have hinted at this type of discretion (K. P. Kearns, 1996; Schillemans, 2007, p. 79; Romzek, 2000, pp. 27, with regard to civil servants; Mulgan, 2003, pp. 221-222, with regard to national governments). Whether it actually exists

in the case of local political leaders, with regard to what aspects of accountability it exists, how extensive it is, and how political-executive leaders deal with it, has not yet received a great deal of attention.

One of the main propositions of this study is that one cannot simply assume that political-executive leaders are the passive subjects of accountability arrangements, only answering to obligations placed upon them by external actors. Whether and how they respond to calls for explanation and justification of their conduct are empirical questions.

Without a doubt the external forums, formulating their demands and holding political-executive leaders to account, play an important role in this. But, such a conception of accountability does not rule out the possibility that political-executive leaders develop and employ accountability strategies. Even though the political actor is obliged to respond to the demands placed on him by external forums, the questions whether he indeed responds to these demands and, especially, how he responds, cannot be answered *a priori*.

'Changing the system': establishing, shaping, and discarding accountability mechanisms

The second way in which political-executive leaders can develop accountability strategies is by shaping the accountability arrangements in which they operate. That is, by shaping the mechanisms that are in place to provide for the rendering of account (see Sullivan, 2003, p. 354). They may, for example, look for new forums to render account to, render account to existing forums through new mechanisms or try to change the (in)formal obligations they have to existing forums.

The question as to who designs and shapes the accountability arrangements, so far has received little attention. Bovens, Mulgan, and others seemingly place the responsibility for designing this relationship in the hands of actors other than the executive leader that is accountable, i.e., external actors (see also Dowdle, 2006b). Executive leaders are expected to act within accountability regimes that have already been established.

Indeed, political-executive leaders, after being elected or appointed, enter a world in which there already exists a whole range of accountability relationships, both formal and informal. The basic features of most accountability relationships, i.e., who is accountable to whom, for what, through what processes, and by what standards (see Mashaw, 2006, p. 118), have already taken shape. Especially in the case of accountability relationships that have a formal juridical nature, political-executive leaders cannot be expected to be able to actively design accountability arrangements. Mayors and aldermen, for example, cannot avoid legal obligations, but they do play a role in establishing what these mean in practice.

On the other hand, political-executive leaders can establish new formal and informal accountability arrangements, in which they have obligations to explain and justify their conduct, or they can change the rules of existing accountability arrangements. Furthermore, political-executive leaders may very well shape the informal characteristics of the accountability arrangements in which they operate through the way they render account in practice. Then of course, institutional changes may be made in order to try to change the practice of rendering account, to codify existing practices, or to foster particular ways of rendering account. This makes the relation between the characteristics of accountability arrangements and the practice of rendering account an iterative one. Therefore, this study poses the question what role political-executive leaders play in actively shaping accountability arrangements and their functioning.

It should be noted that, within the domain of this study, both types of strategies are employed within the context of the existing representative democracy that has a consensual nature. Whereas political-executive leaders may establish new accountability arrangements or discard others, the accountability regime of the representative democracy still provides the basic framework for the accountability arrangements in which they operate. Nevertheless, as the next few chapters will show, the practice of accountability that has emerged in local government as a consequence of local executives' accountability strategies has some characteristics that are atypical for representative democracy.

4

Approach and methods: why study human service facility siting, and how?

The previous chapters outlined the practical and the theoretical puzzles that motivate this study, formulated the research question (Chapter 1), conceptualised the two main concepts: accountability and authority (Chapter 2), and outlined the analytical framework that is used in the analysis (Chapter 3). The current chapter explains how the study was conducted. It works from the general to the specific. First, the approach is introduced. Then the research strategy, the case-selection strategy, and the methods are subsequently discussed. Along the way, the main methodological choices that were made are explained and justified. The chapter closes with two reflections.

4.1 Approach and research strategy

4.1.1 Qualitative approach

The goal of this thesis was to study how the rendering of account by local political-executive leaders influences their authority. It set out to gain a detailed understanding of the practice of accountability, which was defined as a communicative practice. Rather than studying the institutional framework of accountability, the aim was to gain a further understanding of the actual interaction between accountors and accountees. Accountability relationships were conceptualised as socially constructed entities that are constituted by perceptions. It was presupposed that perceptions of both accountability and of the perceived reasonableness of leaders' decisions play a crucial role in accountability processes (see Section 2.1.1). Uncovering such perceptions requires in-depth analysis of actors' motivations, considerations, and convictions (see also Hernandez *et al.*, 2011, p. 1168). Previous research from the field of human service facility siting, which provides less detailed analyses thereof, has been criticised for producing invalid theories (see Wolsink, 2006; Van der Horst, 2007). Therefore, a qualitative approach best suited the purposes of the current research because it provided the opportunity for an intensive study of these perceptions, motivations, and convictions.

The qualitative approach allowed for 'thick description' (Ponterotto, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) of the actual communicative practice of accountability, which included accountors' and accountees' intentions, strategies, and motivations. It also provided the opportunity to analyse the socio-political context of the practices of accountability

in great detail. Such an approach was crucial in trying to uncover accountors' accountability strategies and the considerations that motivated these, which was a core aspect of the current research, given its conceptualisation of 'accountability' and 'authority' and given how it perceived the relation between the two. The study of both the communicative practice of accountability and the perceptions of reasonableness substantially benefited from the qualitative approach.

4.1.2 Case study research strategy

The interest of the current study lay with the relationship between the rendering of account and authority in real-life socio-political settings. The actual practice of accountability was the main focus. This required an in-depth analysis of accountability practices and executives' authority in their socio-political context. Providing such depth is one of the prime virtues of a case study research design over other research designs (Gerring, 2004, pp. 346-348). For that reason a case study design was most appropriate for the current study.

The case study research design allowed for the holistic analysis of the practice of accountability in its historic and real-life socio-political context (see Flyvbjerg, 2006). The approach was very valuable in trying to understand how the rendering of account influenced authority because it allowed for the in-depth description of each of the unique contexts in which the rendering of account took place. Since many factors potentially affected the influence of the accountability strategies on political-executives' authority, a full understanding of the context was required, especially in the context of complex decision-making. The case study design was particularly suitable for such an analysis.

To further exploit these advantages of the case study design, the approach to the case studies was case-oriented in nature, rather than variable-oriented (Ragin, 1987), which meant that it aimed at mapping all the relevant characteristics of the cases in full detail, rather than the values of some specific variables only. This approach allowed for the in-depth description and analysis of the relevant characteristics of the cases: accountors' accountability strategies, the perceived reasonableness of the location decisions by accountees, the decision-making processes, neighbourhood characteristics, and the political context, which were necessary so as to establish whether and how local executives were able to regain authority through the rendering of account. Gaining an understanding of the context of the cases was crucial for understanding public leadership accountability because of the situational nature of leadership (see Hernandez *et al.*, 2011).

Given the fact that in Chapter 2 'authority' was conceptualised as specific authority, that is, as a state of belief that is related to specific conduct of a particular actor, the cases were defined in terms of conduct, *in casu* particular decisions. The focus of the

current study was on the authority of local political-executives with regard to particular decisions. Therefore, a decision, or a collection of decisions presented as a single one, taken by a political-executive constituted a case. Since one of the cases, that is, the Rotterdam case, included sets of decisions that were made by different political-executives, and therefore included multiple accountors, that case was subdivided into six sub-cases that functioned as 'embedded cases' (Yin, 2003).

Since the aim of this study was to analyse the impact of accountability strategies on authority, the unit of analysis was defined as an accountability strategy. This meant that an individual executive that employed different accountability strategies for different location decisions constituted multiple units of analysis within one case. The unit of analysis thus did not necessarily coincide with the cases: the authority of a particular executive with regard to a particular decision may have been affected by more than one accountability strategy.

For ease of readability, though, the analysis in the remainder of this thesis is structured along the lines of the cases, that is, the collections of decisions, which, with the exception of 's-Hertogenbosch, coincided with the cities. This may to some extent obscure the fact that cases entailed multiple accountability strategies. The fact that the accountability strategies to a large extent proved to coincide with the cases and in turn with the political-executives involved, motivated the decision to structure the book along the lines of the cases rather than along the lines of the units of analysis, since the former are more easily identifiable to the reader.

4.2 Case-selection strategy

Limited time in combination with a research strategy that required intensive qualitative study, called for the necessity to restrict the current study to a small N study: it included six main cases. This produced a potential "many variables, small N" problem (Lijphart, 1975, p. 159), where the number of variables was too large for the number of cases to uniquely determine the influence of each of the variables. Two measures were taken to counteract this problem. First, the current research was grafted upon the 'comparable-cases strategy' (Lijphart, 1975, pp. 163-165). Second, the number of cases was increased by spatial variation and by analysing six embedded sub-cases in the Rotterdam case. The increase of the number of cases meant that there was still substantial variance in the independent variable, that is, the accountability strategies. At the same time the comparable-cases strategy meant that possible intermediary variables were excluded from the research as much as possible. The next section elaborates on the comparability of the cases and explains and justifies the main choices.

4.2.1 Comparable-cases strategy

With the aim of reducing the number of variables, cases were chosen that have a large number of important coinciding characteristics. All cases met the following criteria, which are discussed in more detail in this section:

- a) They involved directive leadership in consensus democracies,
- b) they revolved around local location decisions from the field of human service facility siting,
- c) they were concerned with political-executives as accountors only.

a) Directive leadership in consensus democracies: selection of extreme cases

The use of the first criterion was motivated by the case-selection strategy, which rested on the principle of selecting ‘extreme cases’ (Gerring, 2007, pp. 103-105; Flyvbjerg, 2006, pp. 229-230). The current body of literature on public leadership claims there is an inherent tension between leadership and democracy (e.g., Ruscio, 2008; Kane *et al.*, 2009). Chapter 1 argued that this tension is most prevalent in the case of directive leadership in controversial dossiers in consensus democracies. Therefore, such cases constitute most challenging conditions for regaining authority through the rendering of account. They are what Eckstein (1975) and Levy (2007) would call ‘least likely cases’ for effective accountability strategies. These conditions provide a good context for assessing the empirical adequacy of the postulate that directive decision-making can be viable in a democracy. If directive decision-making can be reconciled even with consensus democracy, it is likely to be viable in other types of democracies as well.

As such, the current research constituted a ‘plausibility probe’ (Eckstein, 1992, pp. 147-152) for the reconcilability of directive decision-making and consensus democracy. But, not only did this study test whether the two are reconcilable; it also probed the plausibility of the candidate-theory that claims that the rendering of account is a mechanism through which they can be reconciled, as long as the rendering of account meets accountors’ accountability demands. This theory was developed in Chapter 2, based on the work of Friedrich (1972; see also Shapiro *et al.*, 1994; Dijkstra & Holtslag, 2010). The aim of this study was to generate hypotheses about the mechanisms through which the rendering of account performs a bridging function between directive leadership and consensus democracy. Scholars like Eckstein (1992, pp. 147-148) and Blaikie (2009, p. 195) argue that such an approach is appropriate in this stage of theory development (see also Gerring, 2007, p. 89; Levy, 2007, p. 202).

The approach closely resembles Bergström, Gianoli, and Rao’s (2012) approach to their study of the reconcilability of strong local leadership and local democracy. The authors state: “What we are interested in here is not statistical averages (...); we discuss whether it is possible in practice to reconcile leadership and democracy. (...)

We illustrate that new leadership practices *could* work, not against, but in favour of local democracy” (Bergström *et al.*, 2012, pp. 122-123, italics in original). Likewise, the current study analysed the reconcilability of directive decision-making and consensus democracy. It studied the practice of local public leadership to see whether directive leadership *can* be viable in a consensus context. To repeat, the current study is more elaborate than Bergström, Gianoli, and Rao’s since it also tests the plausibility of the candidate-theory that the rendering of account is a mechanism that drives the reconcilability of the two. It is also more specific in the sense that it distinguishes between different models of local democracy, focusing on consensus democracy only, rather than on the abstract idea of ‘democracy’ as such. By incorporating the theoretical diversity of understandings of democracy and the empirical variety in democratic systems, this study functions as a more thorough test of the reconcilability of directive leadership and democracy (see also Hendriks, 2010; Hendriks & Karsten, forthcoming 2013).

Country selection

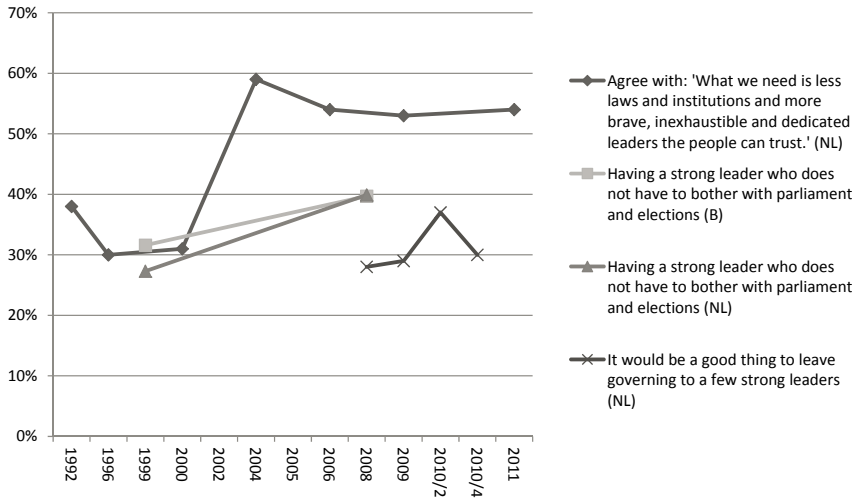
The motivation to conduct the plausibility probe in the Netherlands and Belgium, or rather the Netherlands and Flanders, was fourfold. First, these two countries are considered to be classic examples of consensus democracy (Hendriks, 2010, p. 68; see also Lijphart, 1999; Hendriks & Schaap, 2011, p. 98; Wayenberg, De Rynck, Steyvers & Pilet, 2011, p. 75). This made them good candidates for the type of extreme cases the current study focused on.

A second motive for choosing these countries was that they are of particular interest as regards the alleged call for stronger leadership. Over the last decades both countries have demonstrated such a call for leadership, as can be seen in the way in which the findings of different studies represented in Figure 2 have widely been interpreted (see SCP, 2005, p. 388).⁹

This makes it ever more interesting to study the implications of directive leadership in these two typical consensus democracies since showing directive leadership becomes more desirable here, whereas the socio-political context is not equipped for such leadership (see Chapter 1).

Third, the relevant local institutional makeup of both countries is relatively similar. Both know a) a similar collective form of government with very similar relations between the mayor and the aldermen (see also Mouritzen & Svava, 2002), b) no directly elected executives, and c) formally collective decision-making in the municipal board. These similarities fit with this study’s comparable-cases strategy; they eliminate a series of potential intermediary variables.

The decision not to include other consensus democracies, such as Switzerland, was motivated by a fourth consideration. Already during the pilot interviews that were

Figure 2. The call for stronger leadership in the Netherlands and Belgium 1992-2011

Source: "Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections", data from EVS 1981-2008 Longitudinal Data File, added categories of 'very good' and 'fairly good'; "It would be a good thing to leave governing to a few strong leaders" [*Het zou goed zijn als het bestuur werd overgelaten aan enkele krachtige leiders*], data from (SCP, 2010); "What we need is less laws and institutions and more brave, inexhaustible and dedicated leaders the people can trust.", data from (SCP, 2005, 2009, 2011).

conducted for this study, it became apparent that there were substantial semantic differences between different uses of words and concepts that were highly relevant for the study of accountability conceptualised as a communicative practice. For example, in Dutch the word *uitleggen* can mean both 'to inform' and 'to justify'. This difference is of course crucial for the current study since the latter can be a form of rendering of account as defined here, whereas the former cannot. During the pilot interviews it proved that pinpointing the right interpretation of different uses of words such as *uitleggen* (that is, how the term was meant by the Informant) required considerable knowledge of the context and the language skills of a native speaker, or even beyond –which was also why all interviews were transcribed-. This was why other, German speaking countries as well as Wallonia, the French-speaking region of Belgium, were excluded. Confusion about subtle differences in language, such as the difference between *verantwoording* in Dutch and *Verantwortung* in German, the latter of which is far more closely related to 'responsibility' than the former, could have challenged the validity of the outcomes of this study.

The consideration to exclude countries on these grounds may seem rather pragmatic. Although there is an element of truth in this, the issue is more fundamental since the research object of the current study, being a communicative practice, is constructed through language (see Foucault, 1994 [1966]). There are, therefore, good epistemic grounds for the country selection as well.

The decision to include Flanders, irrespective of subtle differences between the Dutch language and the Flemish language (and also differences in institutional makeup) was motivated by the expectation that these differences could be overcome by interpretation and by the desire to include cases that varied in political administrative culture. Political administrative culture, however, was not included as an independent variable since the aim of this study was not to explain differences in accountability strategies. Rather, the decision to include Flemish cases was motivated by a desire to broaden the range of accountability strategies available in the comparison.

b) Location decisions from the field of human service facility siting: extreme and comparable cases and practical relevance

Chapter 1 has argued that the tension between leadership and democracy is inherent. Since politics revolves around conflict, all political decisions are inherently controversial (Terpstra, 2002). Such an assertion could suggest that all political decisions in consensus democracy qualify as the type of extreme cases this study was after. This is, of course, not true. In practice some decisions are (far) more controversial than others. Furthermore, this study focuses on a particular type of decisions, namely those that were made in a directive, that is, a non-participative, decisive way. Such decisions are made in all kinds of policy fields, but these are not necessarily directly comparable.

It was decided to focus on the field of human service facility siting, that is, location decisions for the establishment of human service facilities for people that are homeless, addicted to drugs and/or have a psychological disorder. This decision was motivated by three types of considerations. First, human service facility siting decisions qualify as extreme cases since the establishment of such facilities is inherently controversial: it is bound to meet (initial) social opposition (Gaber, 1996; Takahasi & Gaber, 1998; Farrell, 2005; see also Kübler, 1999; Zippay & Lee, 2008). Human service facilities are often identified as facilities that are particularly difficult to site (Gaber, 1996; Takahasi & Gaber, 1998; compare Takahasi & Dear, 1997).

This postulate was corroborated by the pilot interviews that were conducted for this study. Prior to the actual case studies seven interviews with Dutch aldermen were conducted for the current study. These interviews started off with the open question: 'May I please ask you to elaborate on the last time you encountered social opposition?' The aldermen passed many issues in review, ranging from disagreement with the spending of public means on art to fierce protests against the intention to tear down a block of houses. These examples often correlated with the aldermen's responsibilities for particular policy fields. There was, however, one particular issue they all brought to the fore: the siting of human service facilities. This also applied to those aldermen that did not have a particular responsibility for social affairs, social relief or public

healthcare. All suggested that human service facility siting was an extreme case in the sense that it was particularly difficult to regain authority for it in a consensus context.

During the actual case studies, further corroborative evidence for this claim was found. Several types of actors identified human service facility siting as an extreme case of controversial decision-making in a consensus context. Consider:

This is an example of a very difficult dossier about which everyone in the city has an opinion. I think it is one of the most interesting dossiers politically, but from an executive perspective one of the most difficult.

(Informant 64, councillor)

The problem you address, the siting issues regarding what we call 'poverty/roof and homeless people' [are] the most sensitive in the social context.

(Informant 67, care agency manager)

When you are interested to know how to say 'no' authoritatively, then these are of course the most attractive, telling cases, with so much resistance.

(Informant 1, alderman)

Human service facility siting decisions thus fit with the extreme case-selection strategy; it can be expected that it is particularly difficult to attain authority through the rendering of account with regard to these decisions. To strengthen this choice even further, cases were selected from larger cities only because citizens living in metropolitan areas are generally less accepting towards human service facilities than citizens living in non-metropolitan areas (Takahasi & Dear, 1997).

A second type of considerations that motivated the choice for this particular policy field was that it allowed for the selection of closely comparable cases. The collective body of literature on human service facilities suggests that siting processes in this field are closely comparable (see Takahasi & Dear, 1997; Schively, 2007), which increases the homogeneity of the cases. Admittedly there are substantial differences between the different types of facilities included in this study. In some facilities clients were, for example, allowed to use drugs, whereas they were not allowed to do so in other facilities. These differences are, however, not of particular relevance for the current study since the processes that drive social opposition are very similar in terms of how accountability operates. Also, in practice, the facilities' clienteles overlap considerably. To the extent that distinctions between the facilities' clientele can adequately be made, neighbourhood residents and others fear very similar effects. The case studies produced no reason to reconsider this decision.

Two other methodological reasons for choosing this field were a) this is a field where local executives in both the Netherlands and Flanders have considerable autonomous executive responsibilities and b) decision-making processes in this field have received considerable scholarly attention. The processes that drive social opposition are well documented (e.g., Vittes *et al.*, 1993; Farrell, 2005; Van der Horst, 2007; Schively, 2007; Verhoeven, 2009), which makes it possible to distil the autonomous effects of accountability activities more easily.

Results from the pilot interviews

The main considerations behind the choice for this field, however, sprung from a third type of consideration, that is, its practical relevance. The pilot interviews indicated that the issue of human service facility siting carried particular relevance for local political-executives: it was on their minds daily. More importantly, political-executives felt that the issue of human service facility siting was closely linked to the credibility and authority of local government. One alderman, for example, exclaimed: "This administration's authority depends on this dossier."

This quote, of course, does not prove that there is a stronger connection between local authorities' authority and the issue of human service facility siting than there is between local authorities' authority and other issues. However, such expressions do show that there is something at stake here. Human service facility sitings do influence the authority of local executives and the latter experience difficulty in regaining authority for their decisions in this field. There is thus a particular practical and social relevance to regaining authority for this type of decisions. There is a strong practical relevance of decisions like these in the day-to-day practice of local government. This made studying the influence of the rendering of account for such decisions on local executives' authority particularly relevant.

This claim is supported by past experiences from several of the cities that are included in this study. In Rotterdam and The Hague, for example, the authority of two aldermen, Marianne van den Anker and Jetta Klijnsma, had been under severe pressure as a consequence of human service facility sitings, prior to the dossiers that were studied for this thesis.

By way of illustration, the intermezzo provides a reconstruction of one of these instances, namely the location decision for the accommodation of ex-prostitutes from Keileweg on the Katendrecht peninsula in Rotterdam. For many of the executives that participated in the current study, from Rotterdam as well as elsewhere, the issue of human service facility siting raised spectres of this Katendrecht fiasco. For the Rotterdam administration it was the immediate reason to radically change their way of working with regard to the 'Strategy Plan for Social Relief', which is included in this study.

The aim of the reconstruction is twofold. First, it shows why it is important to study political-executives' conduct with regard to human service facility siting. Second, it shows the importance of the rendering of account, or the lack thereof in relation to this type of decisions.

Intermezzo: "Residents waved white handkerchiefs in disgust"

Accommodating former prostitutes from the Keileweg on Katendrecht

On Friday 4 February 2005 the Rotterdam municipal board organised a meeting for residents from the Katendrecht peninsula to inform them about plans to accommodate a group of former prostitutes from the Keileweg streetwalkers' district in a premise in Veerlaan, located in Katendrecht. The news unintentionally had gotten out about a week before and had caused substantial upheaval in Katendrecht (soothingly called 'de Kaap'). Inhabitants strongly opposed the plans, as became clear, among other things, in a meeting of the Katendrecht residents' association KBO, February 1st (Potters, 2005). Katendrecht's inhabitants strongly opposed the decision. Also, the executives of the Feijenoord district government, to which Katendrecht belongs, could not agree less with the municipal executives' decision. Its planning responsibilities had already been called in by municipal authorities, so that it could not block realisation in Veerlaan.

Nevertheless, municipal authorities decided to carry through with the decision and invited residents to a public meeting in which the then mayor Ivo Opstelten and the then alderman Marianne van den Anker informed residents about their plans. The evening ended in what has been described as "pandemonium" ("Geen opvang op Katendrecht", 2005). Opstelten and Van den Anker were booed, intimidated, belittled, and screamed at (Oomen, 2005; "Katendrecht joelt en huilt...", 2005). Those present waved white handkerchiefs as a farewell to both executives (De Koning, 2005). Katendrecht's inhabitants were furious and were unwilling to accept the decision to locate ex-prostitutes in Katendrecht. Eventually, the meeting ended prematurely when several neighbourhood residents stood up and left.

The meeting was widely regarded as a defeat of the municipal authorities. Public opinion held that the authorities had given in to Katendrecht's protests (Pama, 2005), especially when on February 10th, only a few days after the tumultuous public meeting, the municipal board announced that it had reached an agreement with the district executive to give up the Veerlaan as the designated location and to locate the facility in the nearby Oranjeboomstraat, which is not in Katendrecht. In the following days, alderman Van den Anker's authority was questioned by many; media as well as political parties openly speculated on her resignation (e.g., Oomen, 2005).

“The alderman’s political fate genuinely hung in the balance”, one Informant held (8, senior administrator).

The alderman’s power play had failed. Although she remained in office, the Katendrecht incident did damage her reputation, in the council, in the media, among citizens and also among district executives throughout the city (see “‘Dit was politieke harakiri’”, 2005). Also, the administration as a whole lost face (see “Opstelden: keuze Katendrecht verkeerd; burgemeester trekt boetekleed aan over opvang ex-prostituees”, 2005).

Still, the story was not over yet. Ever since the municipal and district authorities had announced that they were now planning to establish the facility in Oranjeboomstraat, turmoil was brewing in the neighbourhood in which it was to be located (which is also called Feijenoord). This caused substantial problems for the chair of the district executive that had offered the municipal government the Oranjeboomstraat option, Wim Straasheijm. The fear was that Feijenoord’s inhabitants would copy Katendrecht’s trick. And indeed, opposition was fierce (e.g., “Verzet in Feijenoord groeit”, 2005). Protest culminated on February 16th, when more than 500¹⁰ residents turned up at a public meeting in which Straasheijm tried to defend the new plan. Emotions ran high (see “Feijenoord pikt ‘t niet”, 2005). Neighbourhood residents felt ambushed because they had not been involved in the decision-making. Also, they disagreed with the location, which was right next to a day-care centre. Again the national newspaper *de Volkskrant* spoke of a pandemonium, which might even have been worse than the first one (Meerhof, 2005). The plan also fuelled political debate in both the district and the municipal councils.

Local authorities had lost a considerable amount of authority in the eyes of neighbourhood residents and their representatives. The authority of Straasheijm was challenged particularly because citizens disputed the reasonableness of Straasheijm’s decision to offer Oranjeboomstraat to the municipal administration as an alternative location. The social and political upheaval continued for weeks, even months. Nevertheless, the facility was established in Oranjeboomstraat eventually. In the end, both the social and the political opposition died out.

This can be explained by a number of factors. First, in the end, the facility was smaller than originally intended. The number of clients was substantially reduced. Second, in cooperation with neighbourhood residents, strict agreements were made on how to prevent incidents involving the facility and on how to deal with them if they were to occur. Third, a substantial amount of public money (around four hundred thousand Euros) was spent on improvement of the area that surrounded the facility, by way of compensation. Fourth, the detrimental effects residents feared turned out to be limited. Fifth, in the months following the announcement,

Straasheijm visited a broad range of social organisations and their spokesmen. These included residents' associations, mosques, schools, women's organisations, business owners' organisations and others. One of his aims was to regain his authority, which was not an easy task.

Looking back, those involved suggest that Straasheijm, contrary to alderman Van den Anker, did regain a considerable amount of authority, not only among societal actors, but also among political and administrative ones. Again, many factors were involved in this. What is most relevant for this study, though, is that one of the more important of those was the fact that Straasheijm made a real effort of explaining why this particular facility was necessary and why it would have to be located in the Oranjeboomstraat. Both aspects of the decision needed intense justification by the responsible executive. Many of those involved suggest that Straasheijm's rendering of account for the decision in the months following it substantially contributed to regaining his authority.

The rendering of account by Straasheijm, thus, seems to have played an important role in the regaining of his authority. The current study elaborates on this and seeks to understand how the rendering of account generates authority for this type of decisions.

c) Political-executive leaders as accountors only

So far, two case-selection criteria have been discussed: including only cases of directive leadership in consensus democracies and including only cases from the field of human service facility siting. The inclusion of the third case-selection criterion, which limits the current study to political-executives, i.e., non-bureaucratic members of executive bodies who exercise political authority in government, was motivated by the fact that political leadership in Western democracies is mainly vested in the executive branch of government (Borraz & John, 2004; Steyvers *et al.*, 2009). In practice, these executives carry the main responsibility for the controversial decisions that are at the focal point of this study and they are perceived as being the chief responsible accountors by accountees. The authority of executives thus is an essential aspect of government authority.

Four types of executives are included in this study. First, *wethouders*, that is, Dutch aldermen. These are elected into the *College van Burgemeester en Wethouders*, or Board of Mayor and Aldermen, by their municipal councils. The board carries responsibility for the day-to-day execution of municipal policies and acts on tasks that the Municipal Council, or *Gemeenteraad*, has delegated to the board, and executes tasks decentralised by national government. Formally, the board is a collegial body: it acts as a single entity. In practice, though, a division of tasks is agreed upon, which means that aldermen

carry individual responsibility for their portfolios (Derksen & Schaap, 2010, p. 65). This is why individual aldermen are at the focal point of this study: in practice, individual executives carried responsibility for the location decisions. In fact, the extent to which executives were able to cope with individualised responsibility and accountability proved very relevant for the success of their accountability strategies (see Chapter 11).

The second type of executives are the Flemish *Schepenen*, or aldermen. Their position is comparable to that of the Dutch *wethouders*. *Schepenen* are elected into the board, the *College van Burgemeester en Schepenen*, by their municipal councils. The Flemish board, too, functions as the executive branch of local government that formally functions as a collective body, although in practice a division of tasks is agreed upon (see Article 53 *Gemeentedecreet*). The main difference between the Dutch and Flemish executive boards is that the latter operate under a monistic regime (Wayenberg *et al.*, 2011, p. 84), whereas the former operate under a dualistic regime since 2002. Under dualistic regimes there is a rather strict segregation of board responsibilities and council responsibilities and neither body dominates the other, at least formally (Engels, 2008). One of the differences between Dutch *wethouders* and their Flemish colleagues is, for example, that they are not part of the Municipal Council. This has important implications for the council-board relations. The Flemish council is, for example, dominated by the board (Verhelst, Reynaert & Steyvers, 2010, p. 43), more so than its Dutch counterpart, it could be argued (compare, e.g., Engels, 2008; De Groot, Denters & Klok, 2010). In practice, however, this distinction is somewhat blurred, especially since the introduction of the 2005 *Gemeentedecreet* in Flanders, which aimed at strengthening the scrutiny role of Flemish councillors (Verhelst *et al.*, 2010, pp. 26-27; see also the empirical chapters in this thesis). Furthermore, monistic tendencies in the Netherlands continue to exist (Engels, 2008; De Groot *et al.*, 2010).

Mayors, or *burgemeesters* in both Dutch and Flemish, are the third type of political-executives. Although the position of Dutch and Flemish mayors differs somewhat, in terms of selection procedure for example, they play similar roles in local government (Van Ostaaijen, 2010). Both are key players in local government and local society. They have formal powers as chairmen of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen and the Municipal Council (note that the latter is not necessarily the case in Flanders because it is not a legal requirement). They also have formal powers to keep local public order and to maintain public safety (Van Ostaaijen, 2010, p. 63). In that sense, the position of the mayor in local government is special. At the same time there are strong parallels between the position of the mayor and that of the aldermen (Karsten, Cachet & Schaap, forthcoming 2013). In the cases included in this study, the role of mayors was mainly limited to their shared responsibility for the location decisions as one of the 'regular' members of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. Their involvement in the dossiers generally sprung from their autonomous responsibilities in the field of public safety, yet,

as regards the location decisions as such, which are the subject of this study, they acted as accountors in the same role as the aldermen.

The fourth type of executives is the Dutch *deelgemeentebestuurders*, or district executives, from the Rotterdam case. The position of the district executives is comparable to that of the municipal executives since they are elected into office by a directly elected District Council¹¹. The district bodies, that is, District Council, district executive, and district chairman, are responsible for the execution of tasks that have been delegated to them by their municipal counterparts, respectively (Van Ostaaijen, Gianoli & Coulson, 2012, p. 154). In the sub-cases under consideration, the municipal executive had delegated the responsibility to the District Board to nominate, and in most cases effectively decide on locations for the intended facilities. Although the formal decision was still made by the municipal executive, the district executives in four of the six sub-cases acted as the main decision-makers and were perceived of as such by the other relevant actors. Therefore, they were identified by accountees as the principle accountors. In the two other sub-cases, Wollefoppenweg and Plantagelaan, the responsible municipal alderman reclaimed the power to decide on where to locate the facilities and is therefore identified as the principle accountant (see Chapter 5).

The *stadsdeeldirecteuren* from The Hague that play a role in Chapter 6 should not be mistaken for the Rotterdam district executives, or for political-executives. They chair deconcentrated administrative districts that have no District Council or districts executive board. In the case under consideration the *stadsdeeldirecteuren* did not carry any decision-making power over the location decisions, which rested with the municipal alderman exclusively. Neither did they act as accountors – quite the contrary. For this reason the The Hague case is not divided into sub-cases like the Rotterdam case is.

This means that the differences between the different types of political-executives that are included in this study are substantial. At the same time the differences are not that great as regards their role as accountors. Therefore, they are considered to be in the same class of comparable executives. Wherever the differences are relevant for the analysis, they are discussed in the individual chapters.

4.2.2 Final case selection

The previous sections have already narrowed down the empirical domain of the current study considerably by limiting it to cases of directive decision-making in consensus democracies in the field of human service facility siting and by focusing on local executives only. Yet, they have not yet identified the actual cases, that is, the “single units” that are analysed “for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units” (Gerring, 2004, p. 342), the particular instances of directive decision-making that were analysed as cases. This study included six cases (see Table 10).

The Dutch cases belong to a recent nationwide policy initiative to combat homelessness, first in the four major cities, later in the other *centrumgemeenten* (see Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport & G4, 2006). This has increased the comparability of the cases since they occurred under similar circumstances, most notably financially, and within a similar time frame.

The Rotterdam case was chosen because of its notable history with the attempts to shelter the former prostitutes from Keileweg (see the intermezzo in this chapter). This previous initiative had created substantial turmoil throughout the city and had put high pressure on the executive board's authority and that of the district executives (see Section 4.2.1). The responsible alderman's authority had hung in the balance. The relative success of the subsequent 2006-2010 Strategy Plan for Social Relief, therefore, was of particular interest: how did the executives manage to regain their authority this time? The Keileweg case itself was not included because a) it was not directly comparable to the more recent initiative to combat homelessness in terms of clientele, approach, and socio-political context, and b) the case was too old to be studied thoroughly since it proved difficult for Informants to recall the course of events in full detail.

Very similar considerations motivated the choice for the The Hague case. The 2004-2005 controversy around the siting of a drug user centre in Van der Vennestraat in The Hague had put immense pressure on the authority of the then alderman Jetta Klijnsma, but her successor, Bert van Alphen, was rather successful in terms of regaining authority.

The 2007-2010 attempt to realise two 'hostels' in 's-Hertogenbosch was included for the opposite reason. The case is a well-known example of extreme social resistance against the establishment of a facility and an alderman's inability to regain authority. The case was looked at with Argus' eyes by political-executives and human service facility siting experts throughout the Netherlands. It was therefore of particular interest for the current study.

The renewed attempt to realise the hostels in 2010-2011 was also included, again as an example of relative success in very treacherous circumstances. This case may be considered to be 'the odd one out' because the decision-making was not of the same directive nature as the other cases since citizens had substantially greater opportunities to participate in the location decision-making process (see Chapter 8). The case was, nevertheless, included for three reasons. First, the case constituted an interesting follow-up case of trying to regain badly damaged authority. Second, the case provided an exceptional opportunity for direct and practically unrestricted access, which allowed for extensive interviewing of the responsible alderman as well as senior administrators and provided good opportunities for participant observation. Third, the decision-making was still of a considerably directive nature (see Chapter 8), which justified including it as a case.

The Antwerp case was included because of the close comparability of the cities of Rotterdam and Antwerp as regards factors such as institutional design, population size, and socio-economic profile, to the extent that they are relevant in the field of social relief (see Schouwenaars, 2010, pp. 15-16). Also, the relocation of the Free Clinic can be considered to be one of the more controversial decisions because of the turbulent past conditions in the Antwerp-North area (see Chapter 9). Similar considerations motivated the choice for Ghent as a case: it was the scene of uncommon social opposition (see Chapter 10), especially considering the high power distance in Belgium (see also Hofstede, 2001).

For two reasons, the fact that the Flemish cases differ from the Dutch cases in the sense that they revolve around single rather than multiple locations per case does not make them essentially less extreme cases. First, establishing these single locations was not much easier *a priori* in terms of overcoming opposition than establishing the multiple locations in the Netherlands. This is because the Flemish cases caused significant social opposition even though this is less common in Flanders (Informants 66 & 70). Second, it was seen that it was easier for political-executives to ‘sell’ a facility when it was part of a large plan that entailed multiple facilities (Municipality of Groningen, 2003; Municipality of Utrecht, 2005; see also Karsten, 2010) – it leads to a feeling of burden sharing among citizens. Establishing a single facility may, therefore, even be more difficult.

Table 10. List of cases

City	Case	Country	Time period	# Locations	Chapter
Rotterdam	Strategy Plan for Social Relief	NL	2006-2010	6	Chapter 5
The Hague	Strategy Plan for Social Relief	NL	2006-2010	5 + 1	Chapter 6
's-Hertogenbosch	Hostels – rounds 1& 2	NL	2007-2010	1 + 2	Chapter 7
's-Hertogenbosch	Hostels – round 3	NL	2010-2011	2	Chapter 8
Antwerp	Free Clinic	B	2004-2009	1	Chapter 9
Ghent	Night shelter	B	2009-2010	1	Chapter 10

4.2.3 What is it a case of?

The current study thus has a rather specific focus. However, it asserts that human service facility siting is not fundamentally different from a broader class of controversial decisions in other policy fields that involve “noxious facilities” (Austin, Smith & Wolpert, 1970). The characteristics such controversial decisions have in common is that they are cases of ‘locational conflict’, that is, a clash of interests generated by a site-selection decision (Lake, 1987, p. xvi), in contrast to, for example, tax raises, which cover the entire territory of local government units. Consequently, the composition of accountability forums is to some extent place-based, which may have implications for

the effectiveness of accountability strategies. It seems reasonable to assume that it is easier to identify and reach out to stakeholders in locational conflicts than it might be in other types of cases. The generalisability of the findings of this study as regards the effectiveness of accountability strategies may therefore be limited to the class of locational conflicts.

It should also be noted that although social opposition to human service facilities is inherent, the actual risk of detrimental effects on neighbourhoods as a consequence of their siting is relatively low (Informants 47 & 65, location decision experts). Contrary to the fears of neighbourhood residents, human service facilities are generally low-risk facilities, as the case studies also illustrate (see Chapter 11). Once political-executives were able to convince neighbourhood residents thereof, or when the situation turned out better than neighbourhood residents had expected, this substantially affected the acceptability of the locations for neighbourhood residents. This finding corroborates the claim that social opposition is closely linked to perceptions of risks (see Schively, 2007, pp. 259-261; also Rasmussen, 1992). Although this mechanism does not directly influence the relation between accountability and authority as it was conceptualised here, it may limit the generalisability of the conclusions, particularly with regard to high-risk facilities, or facilities with yet unknown risks (e.g., facilities that rely on innovative technology) since such facilities are not directly comparable to human service facilities. In addition to this, although the location decisions as such were highly controversial, there was general political consensus about the necessity of the human service facilities *sec* in all six cases. The mechanisms that operate here may be different from cases in which there is not such a consensus.

At the same time, the main mechanism that drives locational conflict in the cases under consideration is similar in all cases of political decision-making in the sense that it serves the interests of some rather than others (see Terpstra, 2002; also Section 1.1). The reasonableness of the location decisions was not challenged because they were place-based, but because accountees did not subscribe to political-executives' considerations. It may, therefore, be hypothesised on theoretical grounds that accountability and the effectiveness of rendering of account are more related to the nature of political decision-making as such than to specific policy fields. The findings of this study may therefore have a broader application in the sense that they hold in other cases in the class of 'directive decisions in local government in a consensus context' as well. The likelihood therefore is increased by the fact that human service facility sitings are extreme cases within this broader class (see Section 4.2.1). Without further research, though, it is recommendable to exercise caution in this respect.

4.3 Methods

The previous sections have justified the comparable-cases strategy that was employed in this study and have justified the case selection. The current section elaborates on the methodology. Three methods were used in the in-depth study of the six cases that were chosen: interviews, document analysis, and participant observation. Each of these will be discussed in more detail below.

4.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

The analysis is partly based on 83 qualitative interviews in total. All interviews were conducted in person by me as the author and were recorded and transcribed by me as well (with the exception of two interviews, at the request of Informants). In addition to those interviews, three other Informants were briefly interviewed by telephone only because they were involved in the cases but could provide little additional information.

Informants included aldermen, district executives, councillors on both district and municipal level, senior administrators, care agency representatives, human service facility siting experts, and management board participants as well as other neighbourhood residents. The latter category consisted mostly of the key figures in the social opposition. Some Informants, mainly aldermen and senior administrators, were interviewed more than once (two to six times). Appendix A contains a full list of Informants.¹² Since some Informants were promised anonymity of citations, Informants are mostly referred to in the case study reports by a unique number and occupation only.

The interviews were semi-structured. Appendix E contains an interview topic list, which was slightly adapted to the role of the respective Informant each time. A typical interview lasted one and a half hours. None of the interviews were shorter than half an hour. The longest took four hours.

Following the analysis, member checks were conducted with each of the key executives. They were granted the opportunity to comment on a full draft of the text (for the Dutch cases: Van Alphen, Eugster (twice), Kriens¹³, Weterings, as well as four senior administrators, for the Flemish cases: members of the aldermen's cabinets). They were explicitly asked whether the case study reports were recognisable to them (see Schwartz-Shea, 2006, pp. 103-104). The member checks, thus, went beyond fact checking (Schwartz-Shea, 2006, p. 104). Rather, they constituted tests of the validity of the case study reports through having Informants reflect on the representation of the cases. The member checks substantially increased the understanding of the cases, especially since they generated additional insight into what motivated the executives' accountability strategies. Other than the regular interviews, the member checks allowed for explicit reflection by the executives on their accountability strategies. The fact that three out of four of them indicated that the case study reports were particu-

larly insightful for them as reflections on their conduct, underlines the validity of the analyses. Each of the case study reports was revised based on the member checks, so that the leading men could recognise themselves in the descriptions. Responsibility for the case study reports, however, lies exclusively with me as the author.

4.3.2 Document analysis

In addition to the interviews a substantial number of governmental documents were analysed. Most notably, these included policy documents, formal letters, minutes of board and council meetings, and reports of meetings with neighbourhood residents. In addition, all relevant Dutch media reports were studied to the extent that they were available through the LexisNexis database (<http://academic.lexisnexis.nl/>). Flemish newspapers *Het Nieuwsblad*, *De Standaard*, *Het Laatste Nieuws*, and *Gazet Van Antwerpen*, were browsed via online databases. Also, numerous articles and other types of documents were obtained through Informants who had kept dossiers throughout the years. Additionally, personal communication between neighbourhood residents and between citizens and municipal executives was studied, whenever available. This study owes much to neighbourhood residents, particularly in Antwerp, Ghent, Rotterdam, and 's-Hertogenbosch, for making those accessible. Internet sites and -forums that played a role in the opposition against facilities were analysed too.¹⁴

Some documents, especially reports on the course of the location decision-making processes and lists of alternative locations, were of a confidential nature. These are included in the list of references, but they are not available otherwise. In the cases of The Hague and Ghent, Informants explicitly asked that the reasons for turning down alternative locations not be disclosed.

4.3.3 Participant observation

During the research process I also attended 19 meetings in total between the accountors and different accountees as a participant observer (see Robson, 2002, pp. 314-319; R. A. Kearns, 2005). Most notably, these included council (committee) meetings and meetings of management boards. During the latter, the political-executives were not always present. The meetings nevertheless provided crucial information on how the reasonableness of the location decisions was perceived by neighbourhood residents and they allowed me to contact Informants based on their contributions in the meetings. Appendix B includes a list of all meetings attended.

Unfortunately I was unable to attend the public meetings in which the location decisions were made public, either because the respective case study had not yet commenced, or because the political-executives did not allow me to be present. The latter provides an illustration of the executives' accountability strategy: they carefully considered who their audience was and separated different types of audiences. Executives

preferred having only neighbourhood residents attend the meetings. They were of the opinion that my presence would have had an undesirable influence on the meetings (see Section 4.4).

At other meetings I was more than welcome. Whenever possible, I took a 'fly on the wall' approach to my observational activities (Delamont, 1975), not identifying myself as a researcher, but rather blending in as one of the neighbourhood residents. During my observations I did not interview other attendees or make notes (I made notes immediately after the meetings and worked them out the next day). Whenever I was asked by others what brought me to the meetings, however, I did identify myself as a researcher of 'governmental communication'. In some management board meetings I was asked to identify myself as a researcher prior to the start of the meeting.

In addition to observing the interaction between different actors, I visited all locations that were chosen to house a human service facility as well as some locations that were rejected, and I explored the surrounding areas for about half an hour (up to six times per facility). These visits proved crucial during the interviews since Informants often referred to specific characteristics of the facilities' surroundings. These visits also allowed me to develop a feeling for neighbourhood characteristics and the nature of the facilities' locations. Admittedly I formed my own perception of the reasonableness of the location decision during these visits, but I have done my utmost to prevent this from having an influence on the analyses.

4.4 Interaction research and its implications

In some important aspects the methodology of the current research has characteristics of 'interaction research methodology' in the sense that it drew from intensive interaction with the object of study and that the research was of a particularly reflective nature (Hendriks, 2003; Zouridis, 2003). In an attempt to generate contextualised knowledge that carries practical relevance for local political-executives, a desire that sprung from the practical relevance of the research question (see Section 4.2.1), I interviewed the executives involved multiple times wherever possible and relevant, and together with them reflected on their conduct and their considerations. In addition, I tried to generate as many direct observations as possible and reported my observations back to my Informants, especially in the member checks. Also, on several occasions I discussed with neighbourhood residents how they experienced public meetings or management board meetings shortly after those meetings (they are included in the list of Informants -Appendix A- as anonymous Informants). These characteristics of interaction research I exploited in the 's-Hertogenbosch cases, the The Hague case, and

the Ghent case. This approach substantially deepened my understanding of the course of events and of the motives of the different actors involved.

It was in the 's-Hertogenbosch (round 3) case in particular that I utilised these opportunities of the social sciences to my advantage. I interviewed the responsible alderman six times. During the interviews the alderman and I together reflected on his accountability strategy, based on our mutual observations. At one point the alderman jokingly characterised our discussions as a form of 'administrative therapy', a categorisation in which there is an element of truth: the alderman became more aware of his accountability strategy as a result of our discussions. My input may consequently have had some, but very limited influence on the accountability strategy itself, especially on the interaction between the alderman and neighbourhood residents. I do, however, believe that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages: the interviews allowed me to gain a very good understanding of what motivated the way in which the alderman rendered account and of the practice of accountability to an extent that I would otherwise not have been able to gain.

A related issue I need to discuss here is the fact that at least in some instances my research had an undesired effect on the cases I studied, which provides an illustration of the fact that the social scientist is irrevocably part of his research object and that there is an interaction between the two (see Foucault, 1994 [1966]). I recall three instances of such an unintended effect of my presence as a researcher.

First, during an interview in Rotterdam I asked a councillor whether the intended location fitted the local zoning scheme. The Informant replied that this was a very good question that he had not considered until then, and that he now planned to ask that question during the next council meeting. It turned out to be a highly complex matter, which was of evident importance in the location decision dossier. So in some sense it was I who fuelled the accountability debate.

Second, when I asked the municipal administration of Ghent whether the night shelter was still an issue for neighbourhood residents, my Informants replied that it had not been an issue for quite some time, but that there had been some renewed interest from neighbourhood residents recently. Some of this renewed interest can be explained by the fact that I had just interviewed a considerable number of neighbourhood residents, among which were some of the more active neighbourhood residents. My research had caused neighbourhood residents to wonder how the issue had developed and had inspired them to contact the municipal administration. This had some minor implications for the answer to the 'When?' dimension of the local executives' accountability strategy.

Third, in the 's-Hertogenbosch case, one councillor was somewhat annoyed about the fact that I, as a researcher, had gained access to inside knowledge during my

interviewing that he as a councillor still lacked. For this he blamed the responsible alderman.

These instances show that although I continually tried to be a neutral observer, I have influenced the course of events through interaction with my research object. I have no indication, though, that such interaction has substantially influenced the findings.

4.5 Studying accountability as a communicative practice

One of the more serious difficulties I encountered during this study was that my conceptualisation of accountability as a communicative practice did not quite match the everyday connotations that the word *verantwoording* carries in politics and administration. Already during the pilot interviews, I noticed that whenever ‘accountability’ or ‘rendering account’ came up political-executives were referring to their formal, political accountability relationship with the representative Municipal Council. They were referring to the regime of accountability as an institution, rather than to the practice of being held to account and rendering of account which I was interested in. Informants’ inclination to interpret the word ‘accountability’ in its narrower, more formal sense provides a fine illustration of the nature of the social sciences, which are highly language dependent (see Foucault, 1994 [1966]).

My first response was to reconsider my conception of accountability. However, having referred to the literature, in which the term ‘accountability’ not only refers to the formal institutional relationship between board and council, but also to more informal mechanisms of accountability and other more social accountability relationships (e.g., Romzek, 2000; Behn, 2001), I decided to stick with my own conception. This decision was also motivated by my conviction that accountability as a communicative practice carries considerable practical relevance, which I obtained during the pilot interviews and while studying the Katendrecht decision in the preparatory phase of the current research. I had decided to take to heart the literature’s call to develop a better understanding of the actual practice of accountability, which, in my view, demanded employing a conception of accountability that looked beyond institutional structures.

Doing so, however, required that I refrain from using the word ‘accountability’ in my interview questions because that would have undesirably steered my Informants towards the formal, political accountability relationship between board and council. Alternatively, I asked my Informants how local executives ‘communicated’ about the location decisions (‘To whom?’, ‘About what?’, ‘With what arguments?’, ‘How?’, and ‘When?’), looking for ways of explanation and justification of the location decision. In this way I avoided forcing the literature’s conception of ‘accountability’ on my Infor-

ments, while at the same time using existing frameworks for the analysis of the data (see also Tummers & Karsten, 2012). Thus, I used empirical data to fine-tune existing theoretical frameworks (see Chapters 3 and 12). The relationship between the literature and the data analysis was thus an iterative one.

This approach means that the analysis of accountability strategies this thesis constitutes rests solely on my own interpretation of what counts as the rendering of account and what does not. I did not limit my analysis to the praxis my Informants perceived of as the rendering of account, but also included other communicative praxis that constituted explanation and justification. At the same time I did not include all praxis in my analysis my Informants referred to as being a way of rendering account because explanation and justification were not always involved. This may seem trivial, but such differences did fuel discussions between Informants I conducted member checks with and myself about what constituted the rendering of account and what did not. In the 's-Hertogenbosch (round 3) case, for example, Informants and I differ in opinion about whether the location decisions were rendered account for in substantive terms.

Overall though, during this study I was reassured that my conception of accountability as a communicative practice was apt and that it deepened my understanding of the practice of accountability in politics and administration, particularly as regards to how local executives conceptualised their relationships with neighbourhood residents. Therein, the rendering of account outside of the formal mechanisms played a crucial role that was also recognised by the executives involved and that would have been overlooked if I had used a more traditional conception of accountability (see also Chapter 12).

4.6 A brief guide for the reader

The next chapters provide case study reports for each of the six cases included in this study. The structure of each of these chapters is as follows. The first section provides a short case history that outlines the course of events and relevant aspects of the context in which the location decision-making took place. Appendix F gives a brief overview of the socio-economic status of each of the neighbourhoods in which the facilities are located. Relevant details thereof are discussed in the case study reports. The second section of each empirical chapter provides an analysis of the factors that have contributed to (not) overcoming social and political opposition, which is of course a broader question than the question of authority. This second section includes contextual information that is crucial for understanding the extent to which authority was challenged and for understanding executives' ability to regain authority. Analysing these factors sheds light on the relative significance of the challenge to authority in

the locational conflict. The remainder of the chapters follows the logic of the first three sub-questions that were introduced in Section 1.7: a) how does the authority of local political-executive leaders develop, b) which accountability strategies do local political-executive leaders employ, and c) what are the effects of executives' accountability strategies on their authority? The challenges to authority and the extent to which political-executives rose to them are discussed in each third section. The fourth section analyses local executives' accountability strategies. The fifth section of each of the empirical chapters provides an analysis of the influence of the rendering of account on authority.

5

Rotterdam: A fair share approach

It is stated that the “rich neighbourhoods” especially, such as Kralingen, Hillegersberg and Nesseland should also accommodate a homeless shelter. (...) We consider this line of reasoning really too crazy for words. (...) Why would the distribution of facilities across the city necessitate a facility in Nesseland, despite [big disadvantages]? This has never been made clear. Why for example not in Ommoord or in ‘s-Graveland? Why not in (the rich part of) Kralingen, just over the district border? (...) Distribution as such does not necessitate choosing Nesseland. But that is how, without any justification, it is presented by the district board. (...) Politicians flee from substantive debate. (...) The net result is that all our arguments have remained undiscussed at the political-executive level up to now.

(Van der Torre-Eilert, 2007, pp. 3-5)

In 2006 the newly installed Board of Mayor and Aldermen of the Dutch municipality of Rotterdam decided to realise 19 new human service facilities for the city’s homeless, as part of a nationwide initiative to tackle the problem of homelessness under the recently agreed upon Strategy Plan for Social Reliefⁱ. Throughout local government, those involved realised that the establishment of these facilities would not be an easy task; they expected considerable social and political opposition. For many, the issue of human service facility siting raised spectres of the Katendrecht fiasco that had put the then Board of Mayor and Aldermen in a very difficult position a year earlier (see the intermezzo in Section 4.2.1). For the Rotterdam administration this turbulent history was the immediate reason to radically change their approach to the location decision-making process. The new approach was developed under the leadership of the newly appointed programme manager, Wim Straasheijm, who, as district chairman, had been one of the main actors in the Katendrecht case from the intermezzo, bringing it to a good end eventually. As discussed in the next section, one of the core aspects of the newly adopted approach was close cooperation with the district governments. Also, some innovative approaches to the communication with neighbourhood residents were developed under the Strategy Plan.

ⁱ An earlier version of this chapter was published as: Karsten, N. (2012). Explaining and justifying authoritative decisions: the case of controversial facilities for the homeless in Rotterdam. *Local Government Studies*, 38(2), 143-160.

By 2010, five years later, the execution of the Strategy Plan for Social Relief in Rotterdam was generally perceived of as a success in terms of realising the facilities and in terms of overcoming social and political opposition. Although there had been substantial social opposition in some cases and also some political conflicts, the establishment of the facilities caused relatively little social opposition when compared to the earlier experiences and given the controversial nature of the location decisions. The current chapter provides a case study report that pays particular attention to the questions of authority and accountability.

5.1 Rotterdam ‘Strategy Plan for Social Relief 2006-2010’: a short history

In 2003 a Dutch interdepartmental working group, consisting of members from several Dutch ministries, published a report called ‘Social relief is clogging up’¹⁵ (IBO Maatschappelijke Opvang, 2003). The main finding of the working group was that homeless people, as well as other socially excluded groups, got stuck in one type of care or another, whereas they should have been transferred to some other type of care. Temporary shelters for a large group of people had become permanent places of residence. Consequently, a high number of people did not receive the care and support they were entitled to. One of the main reasons for this was that there was a substantial shortage of appropriate accommodations, according to the IBO, even though appropriate accommodation was considered essential for good quality care and support (House of Representatives, 2007-2008, 29 325, no 25, p. 8). Similar findings came from a series of social relief monitor’s annual reports published between 2000 and 2005 by the influential Trimbos Institute, the National Institute of Mental Health and Addiction in the Netherlands.

Therefore the Dutch Cabinet, already in 2003, aimed at an expansion of housing facilities for roof- and homeless people (House of Representatives, 2003-2004, 29 325, no 1; see also House of Representatives, 2007-2008, 31 200 Ch. XVIII, no 2, p. 26, 30). On 7 February 2006 this ambition crystallised in a ‘Strategy Plan for Social Relief’ (Ministry of Health Welfare and Sport & G4, 2006), in which the municipalities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht (called ‘G4’, after the four major cities in the Netherlands) and the ministry agreed on their shared “wish to improve the living conditions of people who are homeless (or in danger of becoming homeless) and, in doing so, to substantially reduce the disruption and criminality that is often associated with their behaviour” (Ministry of Health Welfare and Sport & G4, 2006, p. 5). The plan aimed to provide “an extra impetus for tackling the problem of homelessness” (idem, p. 5). The plan was supported by a number of other organisations, such

as the umbrella organisation of Dutch housing associations (*Aedes*), the Dutch sector organisation of institutions in mental health care and care and treatment of drug addicts (*GGZ Nederland*), as well as the National Association for the Homeless (*LVT*), the Federation of Shelters (*Federatie Opvang*), and the Salvation Army.

For the municipality of Rotterdam, these ambitions meant that it had to provide adequate housing facilities for an estimated 1.740 homeless people by the year 2010 (Municipality of Rotterdam, 2006). This meant that 19 new locations had to be found within the city borders between 2006 and 2010.

Straasheijm became programme manager for the initiative. Together with the alderman responsible for Social Affairs, Jantine Kriens, he started out by drawing up a covenant between the municipal government and the then thirteen decentralised district governments¹⁶ [*deelgemeenten*], which was meant to establish the district governments' commitment to realising the facilities. Starting from the belief that a fruitful cooperation between the decentralised district governments and the municipal administration was essential for the success of the project, the decentralised district governments were assigned a crucial role in the decision-making processes over the locations and in the communication with neighbourhood residents. The district executives were assigned the task of coordinating the search for locations within their district and nominating intended locations, being facilitated by municipal agencies.

The district executives have an important say in the choice between locations within the districts. The search for locations is coordinated by the districts. (...) A principled choice was made for this approach. It will need to be upheld throughout; a fall-back into centralism will be disastrous.

(Municipality of Rotterdam, 2006, pp. 10, 24)

Although the municipal government formally made the final location decision, the role of the district governments was crucial, for which reason the location decisions were perceived as a delegated responsibility (Informant 9, district executive). Later, the district governments would also issue building permits, etc., for the facilities. And what is more important for the current study, district executives acted as the main accountors for the location decisions, with the exception of the Wollefoppenweg sub-case and the Plantagelaan sub-case (see Section 5.3).

In the latter sub-case the municipal alderman reclaimed the responsibility to coordinate the location decisions as it was agreed upon under the Strategy Plan (Kralingen-Crooswijk district board, 2009; Rotterdam Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2009; WagenaarHoes Organisatieadvies, 2010, p. 10). This procedure mirrors the possibility granted to the municipal board by district by-law to withdraw responsibilities delegated to the municipal districts (Article 96, paragraph 1 *Deelgemeenteverordening*

2010). Since the location decisions as such were not formal decisions, though, such a procedure was not necessary.

The covenant between the districts and the municipal government established a distribution of the 19 facilities over the 13 district governments, based on five criteria: a) a minimum of one facility per district, b) an equal distribution based on the number of inhabitants per district, c) a correction based on the number of existing facilities in the district, d) a correction based on the socio-economic state of the district [*leefbaarheid*], and e) a correction based on earlier duties to house human service facilities (Rotterdam Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2006, p. 4). Each district would house its 'fair share' of facilities. The result was a fixed task per district government (see Appendix D). This fair share approach (see Rose, 1993; Gaber, 1996, p. 662ff; Karsten, 2010) was crucial for attaining the necessary support from the district governments for the establishment of the facilities (Informants 5, 8, and 11, senior administrators).

Although there were important differences in terms of the role eventually played by the municipal government (see the end of this section), the overall approach to the decision-making about the locations was very similar in each of the districts. One of the main aspects of the location decisions was that they were made in a directive, non-participative way. This description applies to the Rotterdam case for four key reasons.

First, the location decisions were made even though a substantial number of Rotterdam's inhabitants believed that they had no social duty to accommodate human service facilities in their neighbourhood (Maagdenberg, Reijnen & Epskamp, 2008). As a result, local political-executives experienced, at least initially, social opposition to almost all of the 19 location decisions. Nevertheless, the executives involved believed that the facilities were necessary and that, therefore, the siting of such accommodations was unavoidable. Political-executives and councillors believed that they had to stand firm and hold their ground, and thus act directly. "To be fair: we acted against the will of the people" (Informant 18, district councillor).

Second, the municipal executive, in cooperation with the political-executive of decentralised district governments, chose to adopt a Decide-Announce-Defend (DAD) approach. Neighbourhood residents were not involved in the decision-making and were informed about the locations only after the location decisions had been made.

[When neighbourhood residents asked why they could not participate in the decision-making], I said: "Listen, I do not do participation, I organise a public meeting. That is a big difference, as you are not allowed to choose." And then they look at me a bit like... Then I said: "Plain simple: as an executive you sometimes have to, 'bang', take decisions." (...) I do not enter in discussions [about the location]. From an executive perspective, never go there. Just stand your ground.

(Informant 9, district executive)

'Keeping everything shut tight' until after the decision was made, was one of the key principles of the citywide decision-making process (Informant 5, senior administrator; see also GGD Rotterdam-Rijnmond, 2007a, 2007b). No intended or alternative locations were made public at any time during the location decision-making processes. The executive bodies autonomously decided where to locate the facilities, albeit in cooperation with a substantial number of public and private partners, including care agencies, the district and municipal administrations, and the police. Neighbourhood residents were not involved in the location decision-making process at all.

This was because political-executives in Rotterdam were convinced that nothing good would come from public debate on the locations. It was seen that consultations led to unwanted turmoil and social upheaval (e.g., De Vries, programme manager, in Delfshaven district government, 2009). Rather than simply channelling social opposition, citizen participation was believed to cause, or worsen, locational conflict (compare Takahasi & Gaber, 1998; Schively, 2007; for Rotterdam see Maagdenberg *et al.*, 2008). Both senior administrators and executives, at the municipal as well as at the district levels, believed that the nature of the human service location decisions made it necessary to deviate from the otherwise normal procedures of interactive policymaking, citizen participation, and/or consultation. "The moment you create the impression that residents have a say in the location decision, you organise social opposition" (Informant 12, district executive). Neighbourhood residents and councillors, however, questioned the democratic qualities of the decision-making process (e.g., district councillor Fastl, in Delfshaven district government, 2009), labelled the decision as "authoritarian" (Informant 11, senior administrator), and characterised the announcement as one "by surprise attack" (Informant 20, neighbourhood resident).

A third reason why the location decisions can be regarded as being of a directive nature is that district executives discouraged residents from filing objections. From the start, decision-makers had a strong preference for locations that would not involve revisions of zoning schemes because such procedures are lengthy and allow citizens to file formal objections and appeals against the location (Informant 11, senior administrator). In addition, authorities deliberately communicated the message that the location decisions had already been taken and that the locations would not be the subjects of debate (Informants 5, 9, 12, 14, 15, 16, and 17). In those cases where formal objection and appeal procedures were available to neighbourhood residents because zoning schemes had to be revised or building permits had to be issued, authorities tried to convince residents not to initiate such processes (Informants 9 & 13, district executives), one of the main arguments being that they would be of no avail since the decision had been made very carefully and in cooperation with several governmental and non-governmental actors.

The fourth reason that supports the ‘directive decision-making’ assertion is the fact that neither district councillors nor municipal councillors, often to their dismay (e.g., Informant 18), were involved in the decisions over the actual locations. Municipal and district executives decided to exclude these elected representatives not only because it would add an extra round of complex negotiations (Informant 9, district executive) but also because, by so doing, local government could keep alternative locations, and debate about them, out of the public domain (Informants 16 & 17, senior administrators). Further, district executives feared politisation of the location decision if the District Council was involved:

The council at any rate does not have a say in it for me. “That is execution”, I say then, “and the council is there to set the policy framework.” Otherwise you get political interests involved, and that is never good in these kinds of processes. (...) Councillors are representatives of the people and, at the moment a very large group of residents says ‘No’, they have the tendency to think: “That group maybe also includes my support base or my voters”, to then go along with the ado. This is not what you want. They are there for the general policy principles and guidelines. They can indicate [what the policy framework is], but the location [they do not have a say in].

(Informant 9, district executive)

Councillors were involved in establishing the boundary conditions for the location decisions, but the location decisions were regarded as an administrative matter, as something for which the responsibility lies with the executive (Informants 9, 12, and 13, district executives). In contrast, district councillors generally were ‘not amused’ by the fact that they had been excluded from the decision-making (see also PvdA Feijenoord, 2007).

To summarise, Rotterdam’s district executives believed that location decisions required directive decision-making. ‘Modern governance’, apparently, does not always equate to ‘participatory governance’ (compare Heinelt, 2010). DAD may not yet be out of fashion, to paraphrase Walesh (1999).

Selection of sub-cases

The remainder of this chapter analyses the level of social and political opposition in the Rotterdam case as well as the extent to which the authority of local political-executives was challenged and regained through the rendering of account. Yet, it does not include all of the 19 location decisions that were part of the Rotterdam Strategy Plan for Social Relief. For pragmatic reasons, namely, limited time combined with a research strategy that required intensive qualitative study, six sub-cases were selected that functioned

as embedded sub-cases. The case-selection strategy for the sub-cases was the same as that of the study as a whole: extreme cases were selected, using the level of social opposition as the main selection criterion.

The case selection was based on a quick scan of media reports on the Strategy Plan conducted through the LexisNexis database of Dutch newspaper articles published between 20 November 2006 (the date of the project plan) and 15 April 2009 (just before the first interview), and an online search for media reports, particularly from regional broadcaster *RTV Rijnmond*. The results, which are included in Appendix D, indicated that there were four location decisions that had sparked strong social opposition: the Romanohof and Wollefoffenweg decisions from the Prins Alexander district, the Plantagelaan decision from the Kralingen-Crooswijk district, and the Putsebocht decision from the Feijenoord district. Based on an interview with the programme manager for the Strategy Plan, which corroborated the results of the quick scan, the decision was made to exclude the Romanohof sub-case since it was too similar to the Wollefoffenweg sub-case. Of the two, the latter was the most interesting because it was generally perceived as the decision that caused the most social opposition and because it was a crucial decision for the responsible alderman (see Section 5.4).

To the remaining three location decisions the Kapiteinsbuurt sub-case was added as an extreme case at the opposite end of the scale, having caused no social opposition even though the Delfshaven district had recently experienced fierce opposition against other human service facilities (Informants 13 & 19, district executive and district councillor). Also, the Sleephellingstraat decision was added, which had produced substantial opposition. As such it did not constitute an extreme case in terms of social opposition, but it was added nevertheless in an attempt to understand what made the difference between that decision and the Putsebocht decision from the same district that was made under the guidance of the same political-executives; could the differences be explained by a difference in accountability strategy? In addition, the Willem Ruyslaan decision was included even though, strictly speaking that particular facility was not part of the Strategy Plan. It was included because the location decision sparked fierce

Table 11. List of Rotterdam sub-cases

District	Sub-case	Main accountant	Occupation
Delfshaven	Kapiteinsbuurt	Gonçalves	District chairman
Feijenoord	Putsebocht	Oudshoorn	District chairman
	Sleephellingstraat	Oudshoorn	District chairman
Kralingen-Crooswijk	Plantagelaan	Kriens	Municipal alderman
	Willem Ruyslaan	Schuilings	District chairman
Prins Alexander	Wollefoffenweg	Kriens	Municipal alderman

social opposition in the same time period and in the same area as the implementation of the Strategy Plan, and because it was the focus of a complex conflict between the district government and the municipal government, which suggested that it would be an interesting case in terms of accountability. Besides, in the experience of accountees, particularly neighbourhood residents, the two initiatives were closely related.

Eventually, the Strategy Plan turned out to encompass an even more extreme case. The Westerstraat location decision from the Centrum District was eventually withdrawn in the light of strong social opposition and opposition from the District Council (Rotterdam Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2012). That location decision, however, was made as late as 2012 and could therefore not be included in this study. Further, strictly speaking, this was not a case of directive leadership, because the political-executive leaders gave in to opposition.

Each of the sub-cases will be discussed in the next sections. For ease of readability, the sub-cases are not discussed separately in full detail¹⁷. Rather, the next sections analyse the extent to which the political-executives overcame social opposition, the extent to which they rose to the challenge to authority as well as their accountability strategies for the collection of sub-cases, referring to the individual sub-cases wherever relevant.

5.2 Overcoming opposition

Although the level of social and political opposition that was generated by the location decisions that were made as part of the Strategy Plan was relatively low compared to the experience in the Keileweg dossier (see Section 4.2.1), there was still considerable social opposition.

Wollefoppenweg was generally perceived as the location decision that generated the strongest resistance from neighbourhood residents (Informants 3, 5, and 11, alderman and senior administrators). Social opposition erupted in the spring of 2007 when residents in the Nesselande neighbourhood became aware of the fact that one of the 19 facilities would be established in their neighbourhood. The information was obtained through a leak in the municipal administration already before the final location decision had been made. The opposition was fuelled by a letter from the municipal board that named Nesselande as the site the facility, but not the concrete location (Rotterdam Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2007). It indicated that the concrete location had not yet been decided upon, but that Nesselande would house the facility. The letter sparked opposition among the (future) inhabitants of Nesselande, which at the time was still being built, and was a socially and economically advantaged neighbourhood that consisted mainly of private property (see Appendix F). Neighbourhood residents

launched an action committee called *Stichting Opvang Nesselande Neel*, organised a petition, contacted district councillors and district executives (e.g., Van der Torre-Eilert, 2007), and later filed formal objections and appeals (Raad van State, 2010; see also, Prins Alexander district government, 2006).

But, political support for the decision to locate the facility in Nesselande was firm; the large majority of the District Council supported the district executive's decision to nominate Nesselande (Prins Alexander district government, 2007a) and did not oppose the final location decision either, although the way in which the location decision had been made and was communicated was criticised. The Municipal Council also supported the decision (see, e.g., Municipality of Rotterdam, 2007).

Two other location decisions that generated substantial social opposition were the Willem Ruyslaan and the Plantagelaan decision in Kralingen-Crooswijk. The former was nominated by the Kralingen-Crooswijk district executive to house a temporary night shelter for the clientele of one of its existing facilities called Havenzicht, which had to be rebuilt. Public protest against the location decision peaked when the municipal government, to the dismay of the district government, decided that the facility would also house a day-care centre for the allegedly notorious clientele from the former Pauluskerk facility elsewhere in the city. The combination of both decisions motivated neighbourhood residents to launch a website, to flyer against the facility, and to march to the office of the district government. Opposition thrived throughout the neighbourhood (Informants 14 & 20). An arson fire in the house of the then district chairman Gerard Schuiling was linked to the Havenzicht plans by some (Tates, 2007), but the link has never been established officially. Eventually, though, the plans to realise a day-care facility in Havenzicht were cancelled (Kralingen-Crooswijk district board, 2007), which substantially reduced the level of opposition.

The Plantagelaan location decision also generated substantial social opposition (Informants 3 & 12), but more importantly, it was the cause of an intense conflict between the district government and the municipal government (see WagenaarHoes Organisatieadvies, 2010). The two could not agree on a location, and the municipal government eventually overruled the district government.

In the Feijenoord district, opposition against the Putsebocht decision was also strong among neighbourhood residents, and among the majority of district councillors. "All hell broke loose" (district executive). The Sleephellingstraat decision from the same district caused substantial opposition from neighbourhood residents (Informant 15, neighbourhood resident), but not from district councillors (Informant 18, district councillor; Feijenoord district government, 2007b). The Kapiteinsbuurt decision from Delfshaven was an exception because it caused virtually no social opposition; there was not even interest in participation in a management board. Neither did it cause opposition within the district council (Informant 19, district councillor).

Overall, both social and political opposition to the six location decisions was overcome throughout the sub-cases over time. Although some Informants reported that there were still small groups of neighbourhood residents that opposed the location decisions (e.g., Informant 12, district executive), the overall social opposition in these six cases substantially reduced. This claim was endorsed by all Rotterdam Informants.

Several factors have contributed to local executives' abilities to overcome social opposition. Three factors stand out. First, the involvement of the District Councils was crucial because it provided the necessary support of the decentralised government entities (Informants 3, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, and 13, executives and senior administrators), notwithstanding that fact that the Plantagelaan location decision and the Willem Ruyslaan decision eventually resulted in intense conflict between the district and the municipal board. The district executives managed to generate a substantial level of political and social support for the location decisions they nominated.

Second, there was a well-thought-out communication strategy (GGD Rotterdam-Rijnmond, 2007a, 2007b), which started out with a mass media campaign about the Strategy Plan in general before the location decisions were made, radio silence during the location decision-making processes, and intensive direct personal communication with councillors and neighbourhood residents immediately after the location decisions. Ideal-typically, neighbourhood residents living in the vicinity of an intended facility, the District Council, and other key figures in the neighbourhood were personally informed about the location decision by a district executive first, whereafter a number of public meetings were organised in which a wider group of neighbourhood residents was informed. This enabled local executives to effectively clarify the actual decisions and to inform neighbourhood residents about the clientele of the facilities in person, taking into account the latter's personal worries and anxieties. Through this strategy of education, the executives managed to overcome a considerable amount of social opposition to the extent that it was based on false beliefs about the homeless held by neighbourhood residents (e.g., Informants 14, 15, 16, and 20, neighbourhood residents, senior administrator; see also Schively, 2007, pp. 260-261).

The third factor that contributed to overcoming the social opposition to a large extent was setting up and having citizens participate in management boards, known as *beheercommissies*. In these boards neighbourhood residents discussed the conditions under which the facilities could be realised and could continue to operate with other actors, such as the district government, care agencies, and the police. For each facility a management covenant was drawn up, mostly cosigned by all actors. Through the management boards, local government was generally able to adequately respond to residents' worries and complaints (Maagdenberg *et al.*, 2008).

5.3 Challenge to authority

These measures, however, did not change accountees' perceptions of the reasonableness of the location decisions as such. These perceptions, though, did change over the course of time. The current section discusses to what extent the reasonableness of the location decisions was challenged initially, and to what extent local executives subsequently managed to convince accountees of the reasonableness of their location decisions.

Similar to the differences in responses to the six location decisions in terms of social and political opposition, there was great diversity of initial challenges to authority among accountees as regards the reasonableness of the six location decisions. There was also considerable variety in the extent to which political-executives regained authority.

The reasonableness of the location decisions was most strongly challenged by social actors in Nesseland, where neighbourhood residents held that it was utterly unreasonable to locate a human service facility in a neighbourhood likely to house a large percentage of young families and that a new residential estate was not a suitable location for a human service facility (e.g., Van der Torre-Eilert, 2007; Van Schie, 2007). At the time of the interviews, though, there was limited improvement, the reasonableness of the location decision was still substantially challenged, but to a lesser extent. Perceptions of the reasonableness of the fair share consideration in particular had improved, although it was still challenged (e.g., Informant 24, neighbourhood resident). In the District Council, however, the reasonableness of the decision to locate the facility in Nesseland, was not challenged by the large majority of the council. From the outset, the reasonableness of the district board's considerations was even actively supported by some district councillors (e.g., Schippers, in Prins Alexander district government, 2007a). It therefore, did not require much improvement.

As regards the Putsebocht location decision, the experience of district executive Dagmar Oudshoorn in Feijenoord was quite different. Oudshoorn's own political party, the PvdA, which at the time held an absolute majority in the District Council, initially was "deeply disappointed" with this location decision (PvdA Feijenoord, 2007). The council's reaction mirrored the social challenge to the authority of the executive. The reasonableness of the decision to locate the facility in the Bloemhof neighbourhood, in which the Putsebocht was situated, was strongly challenged by the District Council as well as neighbourhood residents, as was the decision to locate the facility in an area that had been labeled by local government as a 'hotspot', that is, a very vulnerable area in terms of public safety and liveability. For those reasons, it had been agreed upon earlier that human service facilities as part of the Strategy Plan would not be realised

in vulnerable areas such as Bloemhof. Yet, the district board decided to do so nonetheless, the reasonableness of which was strongly challenged by the District Council.

Oudshoorn, however, managed to regain authority for the decision to a large extent. She discussed the location decision in an informal meeting with the PvdA district councillors, in which she explained and justified why the location decision deviated from the previous arrangements. This was not an easy task and required a “long chat” (district executive). Eventually, though, the District Council was fairly convinced of the reasonableness of the decision after Oudshoorn had explained that this was a good opportunity to put a facility that was already being developed forward for inclusion in the Strategy Plan. Eventually, the PvdA district councillors still did not support the Putsebocht location decision, but found it tolerable: “I am not a supporter of this location, but if it [the facility, NK] is really necessary, all right then, do it in Bloemhof”¹⁸ (Informant 18, district councillor). This process was fostered by the fact that the PvdA did want to risk a fight with its own district executive over the location decision, which was an expression of ‘the politics of accountability’ (Flinders, 2001), that is, the political-strategic dimension of accountability practices. Similarly, at least a pivotal group of neighbourhood residents eventually tolerated the decision.

By contrast, the reasonableness of the Sleephellingsstraat location in the same district was challenged only very weakly by district councillors. Although some councillors worried that the location was somewhat isolated, overall the decision was perceived as a reasonable one (Informant 18, district councillor; Feijenoord district government, 2007b). For neighbourhood residents, this was different since they significantly challenged the reasonableness of siting the facility in the vicinity of a school (Informant 14, neighbourhood resident). At the time of the interviews, however, the reasonableness of the Sleephellingsstraat was only weakly challenged by neighbourhood residents (Informant 14), which may at least in part be explained by the fact that the level of nuisance turned out to be relatively low; locating a facility near a school turned out not to be too problematic. Also, the reasonableness of the fair share consideration was acknowledged.

The Willem Ruyslaan sub-case from Kralingen-Crooswijk was a complex one. Initially, the reasonableness of the location decision was strongly challenged by both the District Council and neighbourhood residents. The considerations that motivated the location decision were intensely debated (see Kralingen-Crooswijk district government, 2006a, 2006d, 2006e, 2006f). The intensity of the debate, however, mainly sprung from the municipal government’s decision to combine a day-care facility and a night shelter on the Willem Ruyslaan, which the district executive also strongly opposed (Kralingen-Crooswijk district board, 2006). By contrast, there was already general consensus on Willem Ruyslaan as a temporary location for a night shelter, at least within the district council (Kralingen-Crooswijk district government, 2006e). When, somewhat later, the

municipal government decided that the Willem Ruyslaan facility would not house a day-care facility, the challenge to the reasonableness of the location decision diminished to a large extent, not only among councillors, but also among neighbourhood residents. There was thus moderate improvement in terms of authority in relation to the council because there was already general consensus on the location there. In relation to neighbourhood residents there was also moderate improvement. A pivotal group of neighbourhood residents, who had strongly challenged the reasonableness of the location decision at first, now tolerated the location decision and more positively evaluated its reasonableness. "Criticism has faded" (Informant 14, also Informant 20, neighbourhood residents). But, neighbourhood residents found the location decision tolerable rather than good.

The Plantagelaan sub-case from the Kralingen-Crooswijk district was equally complex. Supported by the complete District Council, the district board had first nominated a location. That particular location, however, was not to the liking of the municipal government. After several attempts to come to a consensus, the district government was eventually overruled by the municipal alderman (see WagenaarHoes Organisatieadvies, 2010). The latter reclaimed the role of coordinating the location decision and chose another location.

The reasonableness of the municipal government's location decision was not only strongly challenged by neighbourhood residents, but also by the District Council and the district board and opposition councillors from the Municipal Council (e.g., Kralingen-Crooswijk district government, 2009; Sørensen, 2009; Sprenger & Van Sluys, 2009). At the time of the final interviews for this case study (spring 2010), the district government's perceptions of the reasonableness of the alderman's location decision had not substantially changed (Informant 12, district executive). When it came to the perceptions of neighbourhood residents, the picture was diverse: some had come to see the location decision as tolerable, while others still strongly challenged its reasonableness (Informants 3 & 12, executives). Municipal councillors had come to view it as an "acceptable" location (see Municipality of Rotterdam, 2011a).

As regards the challenge to authority, the Kapiteinsbuurt sub-case from Delfshaven was the odd one out since its reasonableness was not challenged at all by the District Council and only very weakly challenged by neighbourhood residents (Informants 13, 19, and 22, district executive, district councillor, and neighbourhood resident). The main explanation seems to be that the property had been used before as a human service facility for young people with autism, and had caused little nuisance. Improvement as a consequence of the rendering of account was, therefore, limited.

Overall, the reasonableness of the six location decisions was generally significantly challenged at first. Authority, however, was eventually regained to a large extent in most sub-cases, in relation to both political and social actors.

Although the perceptions of reasonableness differed between social and political actors and between sub-cases, there was one common denominator: both district councillors and neighbourhood residents generally supported the fair share consideration that motivated a large part of the location decisions eventually. Although many still opposed concrete location decisions, they subscribed to reasonableness of the normative idea that facilities should be equally distributed across the city. “They realised that it was a suitable and tenable line of reasoning” (Informant 11, senior administrator). The criteria that had been used to determine the number of facilities were supported, particularly the minimum of one facility per district and the distribution according to the number of inhabitants (e.g., Informants 10, 14, 15, 18, and 19, councillor, district councillor, neighbourhood residents). By contrast, the reasonableness of the DAD location decision-making procedure was still disputed by the large majority of Informants, particularly neighbourhood residents (e.g., Informants 14, 18, 20, 22, 24, and 25, neighbourhood residents and district councillor).

5.4 Rotterdam’s local executives’ accountability strategies

This section provides an overview of the accountability strategies employed by political executives in the Rotterdam case. It also indicates how these contributed to lessening the initial social opposition and to regaining the authority of executives. To structure the analysis, the model of accountability from Chapter 3 is used, which consists of the six dimensions: ‘Who?’, ‘To whom?’, ‘For what?’, ‘With what arguments?’, ‘How?’, and ‘When?’.

I: Who rendered account?

Although the final location decisions were formally made by the municipal government, district executives were positioned as the main accountors in four of the six sub-cases, following their crucial role in the decision-making process and following the communication strategy that had been developed. This can be considered to be a ‘second order accountability strategy’ (see Chapter 3) since the formal accountability relationship between the municipal executive and citizens was shaped so that the district executives acted as the main accountors instead. At the same time this strategy to a large extent honoured the actual decision-making process. The fact that district executives nominated locations meant that they carried a great deal of the responsibility for the location decisions, for which reason they consequently rendered account for them. Following the logic of the communication plan, the main decision-makers acted as accountors (GGD Rotterdam-Rijnmond, 2007a, 2007b). This strategy implied that care agencies, senior administrators, and to a lesser extent (district) councillors,

were exempted from having to explain and justify location decisions. The guiding principle was that the political decision-makers rendered account for the decisions they made. That was also why alderman Kriens took over the rendering of account from the district executives in the Plantagelaan sub-case: having overruled the district executives, she carried the main responsibility for the location decision.

In the experience of the political-executives it was crucial that they personally rendered account for their decisions as political decision-makers, in order for the accountability to be effective in terms of regaining authority. The reason for this was mainly a strategic one. According to local executives, the level of social resistance to controversial location decisions is generally lower when they render account for them themselves as executives, rather than rely on others (Informants 3, 9, and 12, alderman and district executives). Furthermore, this was also one of the ways in which the executives increased their accountability as part of their alleged democratic duty: "I could leave that to my administration, but [these decisions are] highly sensitive in a political sense. [Rendering account for them], I believe, is the task of the executive. (...) I need to be accountable" (Informant 9, district executive).

Only the Wollefoppenweg sub-case forms a partial exception because there alderman Kriens positioned herself as the prime accountant, alongside the Prins Alexander district executives. This strategy was chosen because of the procedural hiccups that occurred in the decision-making process there, with regard to the leak, and because the success of the Wollefoppenweg sub-case in Kriens' experience was crucial for the success of the citywide social relief policy.

For me Nesselande was also greatly important, as Nesselande was just typically an area where we needed to bring into effect the fair distribution across Rotterdam. (...) It was a very important place to really make clear to the residents of Delfshaven and Feijenoord that we took the fair share principle very seriously. That, of course, made the residents in Nesselande rather fierce. (...) In Nesselande people literally asked me how on earth I could initiate siting human service facilities in the neighbourhood that consisted mainly of private property; which is what triggered me to follow suit and to participate in the debate actively, too.

(alderman Kriens)

A second partial exception was the Kapiteinsbuurt sub-case, where local bureaucrats and care agencies took over the rendering of account from the district executive because of the low controversiality of the location decision. In the other sub-cases, though, the district executives, or the alderman, rendered account for the location decisions. In five of the six sub-cases, the political-executives positioned themselves

as the main accountors. The three district executives were supported in this by co-executives, admittedly more so in the board-citizens accountability relationship than in the board-council accountability relationship. They shared accountability with the other district executives from their districts, who also set out to explain and justify the location decisions to neighbourhood residents.

The personal approach that was adopted, in which the political decision-makers acted as the prime accountors, was very much appreciated by neighbourhood residents (e.g., Informants 15, 20, and 25, neighbourhood residents). What was particularly appreciated by them was the fact that the accountors were readily accessible to them, also in terms of accountability, *aanspreekbaar* in Dutch (e.g., Informants 10, 15 and 20, neighbourhood residents, councillor):

Then I call to account the Feijenoord district executive, because they are the ones who, by order of the city, impose this on us. And then of course it makes a big difference that someone is very accessible, instead of it all being so far removed from one.

(Informant 15, neighbourhood resident)

The alderman was also always accessible for people. That is very important, both for people who belong in the Strategy Plan and for neighbourhood residents. (...). She is very accessible, and that is an important feature of this alderman. It is very important for aldermanship in general, I find.

(Informant 10, councillor)

II: To whom did local political-executive leaders render account?

Although the local political-executives perceived a number of accountability relationships with regard to location decisions, they directed their accountability activities to particular forums. With regard to the location decision, district executives tended to focus on neighbourhood residents, the District Council, and individuals. This focus was motivated by the fact that those actors possessed the greatest blocking power when it came to realising the facility, once the location decision had been made.

In all six sub-cases the executives rendered account to the council. The district executives rendered account to the district councils and the alderman rendered account to the Municipal Council. Generally, though, they rendered account to council committees first rather than to the council as a whole. In the Kapiteinsbuurt sub-case and the Sleephellingsstraat sub-case the latter did not even take place, because rendering account to the council committee sufficed. Two district executives chose to render account separately to the chairs of the political party groups in the District Council

first. Account was also rendered to individual councillors, by both district executives and the alderman.

As regards the rendering of account, most of executives' energy was taken up in explaining and justifying a location decision to the councils and to neighbourhood residents. Other forums, such as the local media, non-immediate residents (those not directly affected by the proposed facilities), the homeless community, and third-sector organisations received less attention, even though executives acknowledged that they had an accountability relationship with these forums and were sometimes called to account by them. Non-immediate residents, for example, were not welcome at public meetings in the Feijenoord district in which the location decisions were rendered account for. Instead, they received a letter somewhat later. Therefore, those citizens had fewer opportunities to hold the executive to account than those affected directly. As such, political-executives were less active in responding to being called to account by non-immediate residents. In the executives' view, the appropriate accountability mechanism for this relationship ran via the council (Informants 9 & 12).

In the six Rotterdam sub-cases, overall the media were not important separate accountability forums. Account was rendered to the media by Kriens with regard to the Plantagelaan and the Wollefoffenweg because of the controversial nature of these decisions, but the other political-executives tried to render account to neighbourhood residents directly instead. As part of the overall communication strategy it was believed that any publicity was bad publicity, especially early on in the process (Informant 16, senior administrator). The media were extensively used as channels of communication, but they were not perceived of as autonomous accountees. The feasibility of this approach was fostered by the fact that the districts were relatively small in terms of the number of inhabitants (44.081 on average for Rotterdam as a whole, with two districts with less than 10.000 inhabitants - COS, 2012). In the experience of neighbourhood residents, district executives were generally readily accessible, which was very much appreciated (see also Hofstede, 2001).

One may be inclined to think that one of the main goals of political-executives in rendering account for location decisions was to create popular support for them (see Bovens & Schillemans, 2009, p. 32). In fact, this was not the case. The Rotterdam executives all held that achieving broad public support for human service facilities was not feasible. Instead, what they were after in the first place was acceptance, in the sense of 'agreeing to disagree': "People will always resist, but resistance can be overcome. That, however, does not mean that people have to support the decision. That is the trick, I believe" (Informant 9, district executive). The acts of explaining and justifying were geared towards arriving at a more-or-less stable situation, in which there was little or no active social resistance and the location decisions were perceived as being acceptable.

Preventing negative sanctions from being imposed seems to have been the second motive in account rendering. Local executives tried to discourage neighbourhood residents from starting objection or appeal procedures and councillors from passing votes of no confidence by sufficiently explaining and justifying their decisions. Hence, from the perspective of the executive, the Machiavellian aspect of accountability practices prevailed.

However, there were a few other, secondary motives also involved. Local executives, in their relationship with citizens, placed intrinsic value on the extent to which neighbourhood residents understood their decisions. Regardless of whether or not this led to support or acceptance, political-executives believed it was important that neighbourhood residents understood *why* they have made the decision they have made (e.g., Informants 3, 9, and 12). Even if it potentially led to disagreements between citizen and politicians, political-executives felt the urge to explain and justify their decisions. Public understanding seems to have had intrinsic and personal value for political-executives.

One might be inclined to question the authenticity of this motive. Were local executives not just glossing over their Machiavellian motives? It seems, however, that the two motives can be distinguished and are genuine because the Machiavellian perspective alone cannot explain several of the accountability activities undertaken by local executives, for example, those activities aimed at actors that have little or no blocking power, or those activities that can be expected to create opposition.

You have to render account for such decisions independent of whether someone accepts them or not. (...) Although residents have not elected me as an executive, they are confronted with my decisions, which sometimes are displeasing to them. Those directly involved have the right to learn from me why we, the executive, believe that we can make such a decision.

(Informant 12, district executive)

As regards the District Council, the political-executives felt less of an obligation to actively render account for the decision on the exact location provided it met the requirements set by the council in advance. When it did not, which did occur on a few occasions, a lot more effort was put into rendering account to the council (e.g., Oudshoorn in the Putsebocht sub-case). Local executives, thus, tuned their accountability strategies to the level of directiveness of the decisions, and not only to the extent to which they were being effectively held to account by accountees.

With regard to the ‘To whom?’ question, two further aspects seem to have been of utmost importance. As regards accountability forums, the magic word for effective accountability in the perception of political-executives seems to have been ‘small’.

When rendering account for their directive location decisions, local executives tried to establish forums that were as small as possible, especially as regards neighbourhood residents, so as to be able to have ‘a good conversation’, a proper dialogue. For example, the initial announcement of a facility was targeted at those that were, literally, closest to the decision, that is, those citizens living within approximately 300 metres of the intended location (see also GGD Rotterdam-Rijnmond, 2007b). Usually this amounted to no more than 50 households. Executives preferred to hold public meetings with no more than 15 in attendance. In larger settings, political-executives, in their experience, had a hard time explaining and justifying their decisions effectively. Several district executives have even tried to establish one-on-one accountability relationships by visiting each household separately.

Another expression of the fact that it was crucial for political-executives to have a proper dialogue with neighbourhood residents was the use of interpreters in public meetings in neighbourhoods with a high percentage of non-local residents, because of the high percentage of non-Dutch neighbourhood residents (see also Appendix F; compare Ghent in Chapter 10).

In that area 75 per cent of people are of Turkish origin. We have therefore chosen to work with translators, as the situation is already complex enough, and there are so many nuances. And those nuances you cannot explain to people who only have a limited command of the language. I can try to explain, but then I know that they will miss half of it, and in general that does not work constructively for the understanding, especially not for such a [controversial decision].

(district executive)

Executives also actively tried to separate forums with different interests and concerns (see also GGD Rotterdam-Rijnmond, 2007a). Immediate residents and non-immediate residents were generally rendered account separately, as were residents’ associations and key figures in the local community. Executives identified different groups of stakeholders and rendered account to them separately. In Feijenoord, for example, a separate meeting was held with local business owners. In other districts, there were separate meetings with elderly people, representatives of neighbourhood associations, and school representatives. The aim of the overall approach was to further separate different forums that held different norms for evaluating the executives’ conduct, so that the accountors could attune their accounts to the expectations that were held by the different accountees.

Executives also tried to make a distinction between the political audience of the district council and the audience of neighbourhood residents. In the communication

strategy, the rendering of account to these two forums followed different trajectories along different channels of communication (see GGD Rotterdam-Rijnmond, 2007b). Separate meetings were organised with councillors and neighbourhood residents. A strict distinction was made between political accountability and social accountability. Illustrative of this approach was the following response by alderman Kriens to a municipal councillor who attended a public meeting, and challenged the location decision:

In my opinion, what you are now doing is unfair. At the moment I am having a conversation with neighbourhood residents. I am accountable to the Municipal Council. Council meetings are the time and place for everything you have to say to me, and not meetings like these. Please step aside for now.

(Kriens in Leefbaar Rotterdam, 2009)

Here, the alderman referred the councillor to more formal accountability mechanisms in order to separate interests. Local executives in Rotterdam believed that their accountability activities were more effective when they were able to address different concerns in their explanations and justifications separately. The interviews with accountees corroborate this claim. Accountees felt that their questions were answered more seriously in smaller settings with a homogeneous audience and in personal meetings.

III: For what did local political-executive leaders render account?

To repeat, this thesis focuses on location decisions, not on other aspects of the social relief policy. However, such a clear distinction cannot easily be found in the real world. Local political-executives were called to account for numerous issues at once and rendered account for just as many at the same time. In Rotterdam this can partially be explained by the accountability strategies of the executives themselves. Generally, they did not render account for a location decision as such, but tried to connect that particular decision to the broader framework within which it was made (see also GGD Rotterdam-Rijnmond, 2007a, 2007b). The location decision was, more often than not, connected to the policy goals of the citywide Strategy Plan.

To the extent that executives rendered account for the location decisions as such, they mainly rendered account for the siting of a facility in a non-comparative sense (e.g. Feijenoord district government, 2007a). The rendering of account concentrated on the suitability of one specific location, rather than on the comparative suitability of a number of alternative locations.

Detailed explanations and justifications of a location decision only were rare because the executives did not want to draw alternative locations into the discussion, e.g., “Drawing rejected locations into the discussion cannot be allowed” (Prins Alexander

district government, 2006). The decision not to make public alternative locations was motivated by the fear that providing comparative assessments would cause unnecessary and unwanted turmoil. The flipside thereof was that the lack of transparency about alternative locations made it harder for political-executives to justify their location decisions because they could not provide accountees insight into the comparative suitability of different locations (Informant 18, district councillor).

The Willem Ruyslaan sub-case forms a notable exception because in this instance the availability of alternative locations became a prime aspect of the political debate between the District Council and the district board. In October and November 2006, the District Council (through a council motion) requested the district board study the availability of alternative locations (Kralingen-Crooswijk district government, 2006d, 2006e). The council demanded a more thorough motivation for the location decision in a comparative sense and proposed a number of alternative locations (see Kralingen-Crooswijk district government, 2006d). In response, the district executive provided an elaborate comparative assessment of alternative locations to both councillors and neighbourhood residents (Kralingen-Crooswijk district government, 2006b, 2006c, 2006g). Other such comparative assessments can be found elsewhere, in the Plantage-laan sub-case for example, but these were less elaborate (Municipality of Rotterdam, 2011b).

As regards the 'For what?' dimension, one of the key aspects of Rotterdam's local executives' accountability strategies was making it as clear as possible who was responsible for what. Especially with the more formal accountability relationships, with the District Council for example, executives generally repudiated accountability for things they were not responsible for. Sometimes they would also refuse to render account for certain decisions when called to do so by citizens. For example, where a municipal alderman had intervened in the location decision-making process, the district executive refused to render account for the location decision and referred citizens to the municipal alderman. Similarly, district executives invited managers of care agencies to attend public meetings, so that they could then refer citizens to the responsible organisation as regards questions about the facilities' clientele and the exploitation of the facility. However, this in itself did not always eliminate the 'problem of the many hands' (Thompson, 1980): in the multi-actor setting, it was still not always clear who bore responsibility for what. But, in the Rotterdam case this problem seems to have been avoided, at least partially, by having the district executives coordinate the location decision and positioning them as the main accountors.

Last, but not least, local executives tried to separate process (how the location decisions were reached) and content (the location decisions themselves) as much as possible when rendering account and, of the two, executives tended to focus more on the content. Process, nonetheless, was also rendered account for on some occasions. When

doing so, political-executives explicitly used the NIMBY argument to justify directive decision-making.

For that matter, with this type of cases (also called NIMBY, that is: not in my backyard) there is always a tension that residents indicate they wish to be involved from the start, while practice is that in advance very few would want such a facility. Then executives have to take their responsibility. In my opinion the WHERE is thus a political-executive choice, about the HOW we must properly consult with the neighbourhood.

(Kriens, 2007, p. 3; also Informant 9, district executive)

IV: With what arguments did local political-executive leaders render account?

A further question concerns the arguments employed by political-executives when explaining and justifying location decisions. The answer, naturally, to some extent depended on the evaluative questions asked by those who hold the political-executives to account and is, therefore, context-dependent. However, far more often political-executives used one particular type of argument in defence of location decisions than other types: generally, they tried to depoliticise the issue by explaining the location decision largely by means of technical and situational arguments.

The location decisions were placed in a largely technical-analytical discourse (see Fischer, 2003, Ch. 9) in which 'pre-established criteria' were important points of reference, such as the required size of the building. In addition, the explanation and justification of the location decisions to a large extent hinged on situational arguments. District executives explained why a particular location was a good, or the best location available, given the district's obligation to locate a facility and the preconditions set by the District Council (see e.g., Kralingen-Crooswijk district government, 2006a; Prins Alexander district government, 2007b). Executives often referred to the expertise of senior administrators, care agencies, and the police, and to 'research' (e.g., Feijenoord district government, 2007a; Kralingen-Crooswijk district government, 2006d, 2006g). To repeat, location decisions were generally justified in a non-comparative way.

Through this strategy of successfully framing the location decision as a technical, non-political issue, public debate on the exact location was avoided to a large extent. In their rendering of account, local executives explained and justified the location decisions in terms that effectively depoliticised the issue.

There was, however, one important exception. Underlying some of the basic considerations that motivated the location decisions was the 'fair share' argument, which was of an ideological nature. When justifying their concrete location decisions, local executives held that they were motivated by the desire to arrive at a more equal distribution of new facilities across the city, not only at the city level, but also at the

district level (Informants 3, 5, 8, 9, 12, and 13, alderman, district executives, and senior administrators). This was, for example, the main argument in the Wollefoffenweg sub-case (Rotterdam Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2007; Kriens, 2007; see also Van der Torre-Eilert, 2007).

Interestingly, Rotterdam executives developed at least two different sets of explanations and justifications for their location decisions, respectively, called the 'citizen argumentation' and the 'expert argumentation' (Informant 3, alderman). In the first, which was mainly used in the rendering of account to neighbourhood residents, the focus was on the siting aspects of the social relief policy, the fair share argument, and the suitability of individual locations in situational terms. In the second, the focus was on the healthcare aspects of the social relief policy and the suitability of locations in technical terms, and in terms of their effects on the quality of care. In doing so, they attuned their accounts of why a particular location was a reasonable one to the perspective of their audiences. These argumentations functioned as different stories for different audiences, which increased the effectiveness of the executives' rendering of account, because they meshed with the value preferences of their respective audiences (see Friedrich, 1972, p. 61). On the one hand this strategy increased the effectiveness of the executives' accountability strategies. But on the other it further complicated matters when local administrators and social relief experts that attended public meetings as neighbourhood residents started to question the soundness of technical and situational arguments, as was the case in Prins Alexander and Kralingen-Crooswijk.

V: How did local political-executive leaders render account?

The communication tactic for the Rotterdam Strategy Plan contained a detailed plan of action with regard to the communication of the location decisions (see GGD Rotterdam-Rijnmond, 2007a, 2007b). Ideal-typically, the chairs of each of the political party groups in the District Council were informed by the responsible executive verbally in a closed meeting first, after which the District Council was informed either via a letter or in person. Immediately thereafter, or even at the same time, neighbourhood residents living closest to the intended facility were informed by an executive in person. Non-immediate residents were then informed in public meetings within the next couple days.

Under the Strategy Plan this method was first applied in the Hillegersberg-Schiebroek district, where it was carried through to the extent that the district chairman, *in casu* Bert Cremers, visited individual households to explain and justify the location decisions personally to neighbourhood residents. The political-executives included in this study, though, adapted the approach to their own preferences.

Under normal circumstances you go into the neighbourhood, and then you inform the 'first circle', which includes the immediate neighbours. And then the 'second circle', people who are further removed, and then potentially a third circle. In other districts the choice was made to go see people door-to-door, but I would not advise the people in [this district] to do that here because then the situation is not under your control.

(district executive)

Instead small scale meetings only were organised with neighbourhood residents shortly after the location decision in five of the six sub-cases. House visits were only organised in Delfshaven.

The small scale meetings were of a more-or-less informal nature, which enabled the political-executives to explain and justify the location decisions and enabled neighbourhood residents to express their worries and to ask their questions. A series of meetings was organised in the first few days after the location decision, or even on the same evening, as it was in the Sleephellingstraat sub-case. In addition, executives offered individual neighbourhood residents, as well as organised groups, the opportunity to discuss their concerns with them in private in informal meetings (Informants 3, 9, and 12). Likewise, executives communicated with neighbourhood residents extensively through e-mail.

In addition, some alternative channels of communication were used to render account for the location decisions. Alderman Kriens, for example, participated in a general debate with the association of residents' associations and took part in a debate, a *Mediacafé*, organised by a local newspaper about the Wollefoppenweg facility.

Explanation and justification of the location decision were integral aspects of all these types of direct contact between political-executives and neighbourhood residents. "You explain and justify why the decision was made as it was" (Informant 9, district executive). Both executives and citizens perceived that they had a direct accountability relationship (Informants 8, 9, and 13, district executives), which bypassed the more formal accountability relationship between citizens, councillors, and executives (Informant 19, district councillor). The direct accountability mechanisms were the main mechanisms through which the executives rendered account to citizens, rather than indirect ones (Informants 2, 8, 12, and 23). The fact that executives devoted substantial attention to this relationship was an important explanatory factor in executives' ability to regain authority. Political-executives took accountability to the streets as much as possible, believing that this was crucial in regaining authority.

In the accountability relationship with the district and Municipal Council, the rendering of account was also of a relatively informal nature. Although account was also rendered in public council meetings and council committee meetings (e.g., Feijenoord

district government, 2007b), a crucial part of the rendering of account for the location decision was of a more informal nature and took place behind the scenes, via telephone or e-mail, or in informal encounters. Consider: “Then I call the alderman. I will not throw it into the council. (...) Those connections are quite clean. It is very important for an alderman to act like that – keep clean lines, clean pipelines” (Informant 10, councillor).

VI: When did local political-executive leaders render account?

The final aspect of the accountability strategies of local executives in rendering account for location decisions, concerns timing. In a DAD approach, one can of course only explain and justify a decision after it has been taken, which fits with the traditional conception of accountability, in which accountability operates retrospectively (Bovens *et al.*, 2008, p. 227; Mulgan, 2003, p. 18). However, this did not mean that the act of account rendering was mainly reactive, that is, in response to being called to account. Rather, the Rotterdam executives anticipated being held to account and did not wait for evaluative questions from citizens before they started to proactively explain their decision. Explanation and justification were integral parts of an executive’s communication strategy from the outset. Contrary to what is sometimes suggested in the literature (e.g., Mulgan, 2000), the initiative in rendering account to neighbourhood residents often lay with the executives themselves.

The act of rendering account to citizens in the case of Rotterdam was often a ‘proactive response’ (Informant 10, councillor)¹⁹: executives did not wait to be called to account by others but took the initiative to render account. Executives, for example, distributed leaflets that contained justifications of the location decisions immediately after the location decision was made and when they first informed neighbourhood residents about a specific location (e.g., Feijenoord district government, 2007a). They also handed out ‘question and answer leaflets’ that included justifications for the choice of particular locations (see e.g., Prins Alexander district government, 2007b). As part of their communication strategy local executives, in anticipation of accountees’ evaluative questions, had prepared well-thought-out accounts of why the facilities would be located at those particular locations. These accounts were not all that elaborate, but they proactively recognised and responded to accountees’ ‘Why here?’ questions. The decision to first inform and render account to key figures in the local community was motivated by the same consideration. This proactive rendering of account to neighbourhood residents was found to substantially contribute to the success of the overall approach to regaining authority.

Similar observations can be made with regard to the board-council accountability relationship. Following the communication strategy, the executives decided to render account, in secrecy, to the chairs of the political groups in the District Council prior to

the final decision being announced, so that the latter would not be caught by surprise when the location decision was made public a few days later. This reduced the political sensitivity of the issue. Oudshoorn, though, decided to change her approach after the Putsebocht location decision had become public prematurely after a closed meeting with district councillors. As a result of this, she decided to inform the district council and neighbourhood residents about the Sleephellingsstraat decision on the same day.

The time span was also important here. Generally, local executives tried to announce a facility and then defend their location decision within a very short period. In five of the six sub-cases there were three days or less between the first announcement about the facility and the public meetings in which executives first rendered account for the location decisions. This was to keep citizens from organising social resistance in advance of the meeting and to avoid potential turmoil (Informants 5, 9, 11, 12, and 13). It was seen that neighbourhood residents were less inclined to resist if they were rendered account early on in the process. Ideally, the first announcement coincided with acts of rendering account. In addition, the District Councils and neighbourhood residents were preferably informed at roughly the same time (e.g., the same evening; see also GGD Rotterdam-Rijnmond, 2007b) so as to prevent citizens from picking up on public information from council meetings in advance. In other accountability relationships, the timeframe and time span were not viewed as being quite so critical. It may, for example, have taken a few days before the location decision was explained, if at all, to non-immediate residents and local media. However, on most occasions, the local media were already invited to the first public meetings so that they too could be rendered account to within a short time span (Informant 16, senior administrator).

5.5 Analysis and conclusions

Several factors have contributed to local executives' abilities to overcome opposition with regard to directive location decisions. Overall, the effective clarification of the actual decision (what does the decision amount to?) and educating the citizens (what are the characteristics and habits of clients of the new facility, and what are not?) were among the most important. In this way, the executive managed to overcome a considerable amount of social opposition, to the extent that it was based on false beliefs held by neighbourhood residents. Setting up, and having citizens participate in, management boards also contributed substantially because this allowed residents to express their worries and ensure they were taken care of. Thus, at least for the political-executives included in this case study, accountability strategies were not the primary route to overcoming opposition.

Nevertheless, they did play a substantial role in five of the six sub-cases in terms of regaining authority. Although it was not a deciding factor, the rendering of account overall had substantial impact in terms of overcoming social and political opposition. Its influence was greatest in the Putsebocht sub-case, where the executive managed to overcome strong political opposition through rendering account. By contrast, the rendering of account was of very limited influence in the Kapiteinsbuurt sub-case because the reasonableness of that location decision was only weakly challenged. In the other four sub-cases political-executives, however, were able to regain a considerable amount of authority through the rendering of account.

The ways in which political-executives rendered account for their directive decisions helped them regain authority. One of the most important factors was that the local executives largely controlled the communication stream (compare Hajer, 2009, pp. 9-11), which was an essential element in the accountability strategies. The executive decided what to communicate, when, in what way and to whom, based on a well-thought-out communication strategy (see GGD Rotterdam-Rijnmond, 2007a, 2007b).

By and large, the relative success of the accountability strategies employed by Rotterdam's district executives, which seemed unlikely given the DAD approach and the sensitivity of the issue at hand, can be explained by a number of factors. First, in rendering account, district executives focused on those actors that had blocking power and on the sources of social opposition, and not necessarily on those who held them to account. Second, in relation to citizens, they set a low target: the main goal was to generate acceptance, not support. Third, the district executives tried to keep forums small and to separate the various interests and concerns from each other. They took accountability to the streets as much as possible. Here, the recognition of informal, direct, and individual accountability relationships between citizens and executives was crucial. Fourth, executives rendered account proactively. Fifth, district executives managed to depoliticise the location decisions and place them in a larger context, so that the location itself became less of an issue. Finally, by connecting the location decisions to the broader policy framework, particularly the fair share approach, in their rendering of account, executives created a certain level of acceptance among neighbourhood residents that proved to be of the utmost importance. The last two factors substantially influenced accountees' perceptions of the reasonableness of the location decisions, through which the executives regained authority to a large extent.

Hence, the belief that popular consultation can be avoided as regards sensitive decisions such as these, which was shared by many executives and senior administrators in Rotterdam, may hold some truth (see also Gaber, 1996, p. 302; Takahasi & Dear, 1997, p. 91; Schively, 2007, pp. 259, 261-262). The analysis has also shown that, at least as regards sensitive issues such as siting human service facilities, it was possible to regain authority for directive decisions. Rotterdam's political-executives had developed

those political repertoires that were necessary to make the directive decisions deemed indispensable by them, and were able to regain a remarkable level of authority with regard to them. Admittedly, social opposition was widespread, especially early on in the process, and, furthermore, at the time of the interviews, there was still a hard core of opposing citizens that bore the executives ill-will and strongly disputed the reasonableness of the location decisions (Informants 12 & 13, district executives). However, the overall level of social opposition has been relatively low. Moreover, local executives seem to have attained, or rather regained, authority to a large extent, even though they made the directive decisions; the location decisions were generally perceived as being reasonable. Executives' accountability strategies played an important role in achieving this.

Nonetheless, the relative success in the Rotterdam situation may have a possible dark side: rather than achieving acceptance, the directive decisions about locations seem to have resulted in acquiescence among some of the local population, especially those not involved with the management boards. Research by Maagdenberg *et al.* (2008) claims that some citizens, especially foreign citizens, did not always understand why a facility was being realised in spite of considerable social opposition (also Informants 15 & 16). Hence, it seems that it was possible to regain authority for directive decisions with regard to certain sensitive issues in the short term, but this may have come at the cost of some citizens' trust in local government and the credibility of the political system as a whole in the long term (see also Bass & Bass, 2008, p. 484). As a result of this, there may be negative effects of employing an apparently successful DAD approach, and enforcing unpopular decisions, in the long run. According to one Informant, directive decision-making not only speaks distrust, it also breeds distrust.

Table 12. Findings for Rotterdam

Relevant case characteristics		Findings per sub-case				
Initial challenge to authority	Sub-categories	Kapiteinsbuurt	Putsebocht	Sleephellingstraat	Plantagelaan	Wolfeppenweg
		No challenge	Strong challenge	Weak challenge	Significant challenge	Weak challenge
Characteristics of the accountability strategy	Political	No challenge	Strong challenge	Weak challenge	Significant challenge	Weak challenge
	Social	Weak challenge	Significant challenge	Significant challenge	Strong - very strong challenge	Strong - very strong challenge
	Who?	Collective political accountability, also local bureaucrats	Collective political accountability	Collective political accountability	Collective political accountability	Individual political accountability
	To whom?	Social orientation	Political and social orientation	Social orientation, limited political orientation	Political and social orientation	Social and political orientation
Rise to the challenge to authority	For what?	Selection	Selection	Siting, partly selection	Selection	Selection
	With what arguments?	Situational and ideological argumentation	Situational and ideological argumentation	Technical, situational, and ideological argumentation	Technical, situational, and ideological argumentation	Ideological argumentation
	How?	Direct, formal, and informal	Direct, formal, and informal	Direct, formal, and informal	Direct, formal, and informal	Direct, formal, and informal
	When?	Proactive	Reactive	Proactive	Proactive	Proactive
Relevance of the rendering of account	Political	N/A	Moderate - significant improvement	Moderate improvement	Moderate improvement	Little to no change
	Social	Moderate improvement	Moderate improvement	Moderate improvement	Moderate improvement	Little - moderate improvement
	Relevance of the rendering of account	Very limited	Substantial - high	Limited - substantial	Substantial	Substantial

6

The Hague: Committing the council

At a certain moment you must stop and say: “Yes, ok.” At some point a decision has to be made. That is the trouble. In some ways politicians in this country perhaps listen to the citizen too often.

(Pieter Winsemius about the The Hague case, in “Radio 1 Tros Kamerbreed”, 2009)

On 27 June 2006 the newly established The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen decreed the The Hague Strategy Plan for Social Relief (Municipality of The Hague, 2006) as part of the Dutch initiative to realise appropriate housing facilities for the four major cities’ homeless, which was the same initiative as discussed in the previous chapter (see Ministry of Health Welfare and Sport & G4, 2006; see also Chapter 5). Almost two years later, on 27 May 2008, the board made public the location decisions for seven new facilities, to be established at five different locations in various parts of The Hague. The decision-making process took place against the background of the 2004-2005 experiences with fierce social opposition against and substantial political controversy around the siting of a drug user centre in the Van der Vennestraat in The Hague. The siting thereof had put immense pressure on the authority of the then alderman Jetta Klijnsma (PvdA), who was severely criticised for choosing the wrong location, even by councillors from her own political party.

One of the critics of the approach that Klijnsma took was the then chair of the GroenLinks political party group in the Municipal Council, Bert Van Alphen, who would become alderman in 2006. Van Alphen’s criticism was not aimed at the initiative as such, but rather at the way in which Klijnsma involved, or did not involve, neighbourhood residents and at her communication strategy. As an alderman Van Alphen took on the responsibility for realising the The Hague Strategy Plan. Motivated by the experiences with the drug user centre Van Alphen (2007, p. 4) took an approach that was characterised by extensive deliberation between the municipal board and other actors involved, in particular the Municipal Council. These deliberations led to a carefully prepared ‘plan of action’ [*draaiboek*] that provided the outlines of both the decision-making process and the accompanying communication strategy. This document forms a characteristic and insightful example of the directive, Decide-Announce-Defend approach that is at the focal point of this thesis. The next section describes in more detail how this plan of action came about and what considerations motivated it. Further on in the chapter, the accountability strategy of alderman Van Alphen is analysed, as is its effect on his authority as an alderman in this dossier.

6.1 ‘Den Haag Onder Dak’: a short history

The Strategy Plan for Social Relief of The Hague was generally referred to as the ‘Den Haag Onder Dak’ programme (roughly translated: ‘The Hague Sheltered’). When discussing the implementation of the programme on 18 April 2007, alderman Van Alphen promised the The Hague Social Developments Council Committee a policy framework for the location decision-making process and for its implementation. On 7 June 2007, the alderman honoured his obligation and sent a discussion paper to the committee members (see Van Alphen, 2007), which he discussed with them in an informal meeting on 13 June 2007 and in a formal council committee meeting on 28 June 2007. These discussions led to a formal proposal from the board, which was discussed in and amended by the complete Municipal Council on 5 July 2007. The final plan of action was unanimously accepted by the Municipal Council (Municipality of The Hague, 2007b, p. 84), which ensured the council’s commitment to the establishment of the required facilities.

From the outset it was clear that the local political-executives, like those in Rotterdam and in consultation with the other two major cities and the ministry, took control over the location decisions (Informant 39, senior administrator), also on request of the care agencies involved (Municipality of The Hague, 2007d). Whereas in the past care agencies had often made the location decisions themselves without political involvement, it was now believed that from the perspective of democratic legitimacy, local government was the right actor to make such political and controversial location decisions:

On the basis of its democratic legitimacy, the municipal executive board is designated, *par excellence*, to make a comparative assessment [of locations]. No societal parties can be indicated that could make the assessment with more authority or with a greater democratic legitimacy than the municipal executive board.

(Van Alphen, 2007, p. 3)

Furthermore, it was seen that governmental decision-making caused less social opposition. Moreover, this approach, which was also used in the other three major cities, meant that a substantial amount of money was available from central government because it allowed local governments to invest in property for the intended facilities with state revenues (*AWBZ*), while the care agencies took responsibility for the exploitation.

As far as the location decision was concerned, the board opted for a clear-cut Decide-Announce-Defend approach. Citizens were not involved in the location decision-making process, nor were any actors other than local government, with the exception of the

Table 13. Timeline The Hague

Date	Event
27 June 2006	Municipal board decreed the The Hague Strategy Plan for Social Relief
14 February 2007	Working visit Social Developments Council Committee
18 April 2007	Social Developments Council Committee meeting on implementation Strategy Plan
07 June 2007	Discussion paper Van Alphen
13 June 2007	Informal discussion on selection criteria and decision-making process with Social Developments Council Committee
28 June 2007	Social Developments Council Committee meeting on plan of action
05 July 2007	Municipal Council decreed plan of action
September 2007	Public meetings – general information on policy
23 November 2007	Progress report
27 May 2008	Board decision
02 June 2008	Meeting with clientele on locations
Somewhere between 02 and 07 June 2008	Van Alphen contacted key figures
02-07 June 2008	Public meetings on location decisions, called <i>buurtgesprekken</i>
10 June 2008	Social Developments Council Committee meeting on location decisions
17 March 2009	Interim report 'Den Haag Onder Dak'
16 February 2010	Board decision on Leyweg
04 March 2010	Public meeting on Leyweg decision

care agencies. Although the 2006-2010 municipal board placed high value on citizen participation (The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2006, pp. 11-12), it believed that such controversial decisions did not lend themselves to interactive decision-making.

A decision to locate a controversial facility at a given place does not lend itself to dialogue. First, because it is hard to come to a well-defined selection of stakeholders. (...) Second, because dialogue only makes sense when a reasonable prospect exists that parties will be able to find a mutually agreeable solution. In the case of controversial decisions we do not expect this. In that situation it is inevitable that the municipality takes up its responsibility and cuts the Gordian knot.

(Van Alphen, 2007, p. 4)

The idea was to inform citizens only after the location decisions had been made definitive (Van Alphen, 2007, p. 8). Citizens were invited to propose possible sites for the intended facilities during general information meetings throughout the city in September 2007, that is, prior to the location decision-making, but they, as well as

neighbourhood associations had no role in the location decision-making (see Municipality of The Hague, 2008c).

The Municipal Council did not have a formal role in the location decision-making either once it had set the criteria in July of 2007. It was believed that the location decisions as such were the exclusive responsibility of the board (Van Alphen, 2007, pp. 4-5). During the location decision-making process the board did not inform the council about the locations that were under consideration because that would have created unnecessary turmoil, social as well as political (Informant 39, senior administrator), nor could the council decide on where to locate the facilities.

The decision-making in practice

When the municipal administration started making an inventory of possible locations with the help of citizens, the deconcentrated district governments [*stadsdelen*], and care agencies, it soon turned out that few locations met the predetermined criteria (Informants 23 & 39, senior administrators) and that the city centre, in the eyes of the board, was overrepresented among the locations that were suitable. For that reason, the municipal administration conducted an additional, more thorough search and extended the location criteria so that it could now include locations that required revisions of zoning schemes, contrary to what the original policy framework allowed for (The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008a, 2008c). As a result more locations became available. Still, the number of suitable locations was rather low.

In total the board considered 51 locations that underwent a three stage selection process in which they were measured against the different criteria (The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008a). The board eventually chose five locations across The Hague for the seven facilities that were needed, two of which were temporary locations for three facilities and three of which were permanent locations for four facilities (The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008c, p. 4). The board chose: Zichtenburglaan 33, Vinkensteynstraat 141, Duinstraat 19, Om en Bij 1 (temporary), and Van Limburg Stirumstraat 30 (temporary).

The final location decisions were instances of truly individualised leadership: “I made the final location decisions all by myself in my office. Even [the managing local bureaucrat] did not know at first [what the locations were]” (alderman Van Alphen).

Although the board recognised that the temporary locations were not ideal, it believed that it was the best pragmatic solution to opt for such locations for three facilities (The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008c, pp. 3-4). Later on, definitive locations were to be chosen for those three facilities. On 16 February 2010, it was decided that one of the temporary facilities from the Om en Bij location would be relocated to the Leyweg 2-6 (The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2010b). At the time of the current research no decisions had been made on other relocations yet.

The alleged shortage of locations can to a large extent be explained by the technical requirements that have to be met by locations for human service facilities in terms of formal regulations, size, manageability, financial feasibility, and availability. At the same time the location decisions were also essentially political. This was already recognised by the municipal administration at the outset of the location decision-making process (see Municipality of The Hague, 2007a) and was of prime importance. As the responsible alderman, Van Alphen had to carefully negotiate his way between different ideological, social, and political interests.

6.2 Overcoming opposition

As expected, there was some opposition against the location decisions after they were made public. Neighbourhood residents voiced their opposition against the location decisions and objected to the directive decision-making process. Social opposition was limited, but existed nevertheless (Informants 23, 28, and 39, senior administrators, see also “Vijf nieuwe locaties voor opvang dak- en thuislozen - Plan van wethouder Van Alphen stuit op weerstand”, 2008; Van der Bol, 2009). The Om en Bij location for a human service facility for elderly addicts, called Woodstock, for example, generated considerable public protest because it was located in a densely populated area and right across the street from a school, and also because it was perceived by neighbourhood residents that the facility forced the current elderly residents out of their homes (see Municipality of The Hague, 2008b, 2008f; Hesselink, 2008e). Similarly, the choice for Vinkensteynstraat caused considerable turmoil throughout the surrounding neighbourhood (see Municipality of The Hague, 2008c; Hesselink, 2008b). The facility in the Vinkensteynstraat was flooded during the renovation; this was also a result of a conflict between the builder and neighbourhood residents, though.

But, overall, strong resistance from neighbourhood residents failed to occur (see, e.g., Hesselink, 2008a; Municipality of The Hague, 2008f), and the location decisions passed through the Municipal Council without a hitch (Municipality of The Hague, 2008g).

Several factors have contributed to this relative success. One of these concerns the role of the Municipal Council in the decision-making. Even though the council formally did not have the power to decide on concrete locations, its support, in terms of the criterion of the ‘political feasibility’ of locations as it was called, formed one of the board’s considerations in the later stages of the selection process (see The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008a).

The council's support [was taken into consideration]. The moment you are able to tell in advance, or when you can see it coming: guys, you should not want this, the council will drop out, then it stops. That is difficult to build into any sort of system. You could call that backroom politics [*achterkamertjespolitiek*], but it is more of a *Fingerspitzengefühl*.

(alderman Van Alphen)

The coalition partners in the Municipal Council feared electoral losses if particular locations, in the city centre for example, were chosen. They therefore had strong preferences for locations outside the city centre. These interests and the council's (anticipated) support were taken into account by the board in making the location decisions.

Not only was the council's support important, the municipal board's individual members' support was crucial as well, particularly in relation to the council. With regard to the execution of the Strategy Plan, alderman Van Alphen was sufficiently supported by the other members of the municipal board eventually. Within the board, though, Van Alphen was in a difficult position being the only GroenLinks alderman, which meant that he sometimes had to 'fight' for his position and for support for the intended locations. The board members were reluctant to fully commit themselves to the Strategy Plan because of the political risk embedded in the controversial location decisions in terms of electoral support from different social groups. On the board, the PvdA in particular did not want to lose face again after the Van der Vennestraat turmoil, which had negatively affected the authority of its alderman in the preceding term of office, and wanted to avoid fierce public protest. The VVD endorsed similar sentiments. Therefore, Van Alphen's colleagues on the board stood somewhat aloof from the location decision but provided crucial support for the final location decisions.

Similarly, the level of (expected) social opposition was one of the considerations in the location decision-making. Although it was held by the political actors involved that (estimated) social opposition was not a major factor, it has played a role in the decision-making process as one of the considerations (alderman Van Alphen).

The role of such political-strategic considerations may, however, have been more prominent than the official reports suggest:

- I: [The alderman] on his own just decided which locations were rejected. Yes or no, entirely for his own reasons. When he did not want to take it to the board, for instance. He simply did not have such a strong position on the board. Or when he was neighbourhood alderman [*wijkwethouder*] of the particular neighbourhood and did not want the hassle. Or when he would have to talk to the alderman for spatial planning, a very strong one in The Hague. (...) He could not counter him, so if he needed him for

a location then he just rejected it. Then we could also not discuss it. (...)
He thus dropped very many suitable locations, which he did not feel at ease with to start working on.

NK: What did that mean for the process?

I: That was quite smart of him. In the end, he was only left with locations about which he was absolutely certain that he would not encounter trouble with the neighbourhood. (...) He did indeed do very well.

(Informant 28, senior administrator)

Rather than being a sign of faintheartedness, Van Alphen's approach was generally perceived as being a very clever one, in which he displayed valuable sensitivity to the socio-political context in which he operated. One might be inclined to object to such a political strategic approach on ideological grounds, but it was generally recognised that it allowed the alderman to realise the facilities with little political or social controversy (Informants 23, 28, 39, and 48, senior administrators).

A second factor that contributed to the relative success of Den Haag Onder Dak in terms of opposition was the fact that the Municipal Council had fully committed itself to the Strategy Plan and the plan of action prior to the decision-making process. In preparation of the policy framework, the board, Van Alphen in particular, heavily invested in his relationship with councillors in relation to the dossier by meeting up with individual councillors, political party groups and their chairs, and the responsible council committee. In deliberation with the Municipal Council a strict division of tasks was agreed upon: the board would make the location decision given the council's criteria and the council would scrutinise the board *ex post* only. This division of tasks granted the board the necessary room to manoeuvre. And by sticking to its mandate and carefully executing the plan of action (with the exception of extending the zoning criterion), the board ensured that the council would not jeopardise upholding the final location decisions, especially after the council committee formally acknowledged that the board had sufficiently met the predetermined criteria (Municipality of The Hague, 2008f). Overall, the approach that Van Alphen took worked out "perfectly fine" (Informant 39, senior administrator). Van Alphen was widely credited for executing the plan of action so well (e.g., "Raad: positief over daklozenopvang", 2008; Municipality of The Hague, 2008f; several Informants).

The council's continued backing enabled Van Alphen to stand his ground in his contacts with neighbourhood residents. In these contacts the aim, to put it bluntly, was "to trick the neighbourhood into saying 'yes'" (Informant 39, senior administrator). This, however, did not mean that the municipal board left the fate of the facilities to neighbourhood residents' approval of the location decisions. Quite the contrary: any

sign that residents had a say in the decision-making process or room to negotiate the decisions was avoided.

In the past, too often [the demand was made] that neighbourhood residents would have to agree with the establishment of a facility. Posing that condition, however, carries the great risk that necessary facilities are consequently not, or not timely, realised. (...) The purpose of communication is, on the one hand, the transmission of factual information, and on the other the explanation of how the choice was arrived at. The aim is specifically not reaching agreement or realising a support base, as this could give neighbourhood residents the impression that they can ask a price for their support or that there is still room for negotiation. This is not the impression we should give.

(Van Alphen, 2007, pp. 3, 8)

The low level of social opposition was thus not necessarily a sign of agreement with the location decision the board made. And in fact, also in this case, ‘acquaintance’ seems to be a better description of neighbourhood residents’ attitude towards the location decisions. Nevertheless, the analysis below shows that Van Alphen’s accountability strategy positively contributed to neighbourhood residents’ perception of the reasonableness of the location decisions. The extent to which authority was challenged is analysed in the next section.

6.3 Challenge to authority

Van Alphen’s authority was already challenged before the location decisions were made. In anticipation of the Den Haag Onder Dak location decisions, substantial public protest erupted in the Spoorwijk, one of the city’s socio-economically disadvantaged areas. Already in September 2007, neighbourhood residents voiced their objections, but as the final location decision approached, protest continued to build, especially in April and May of 2008. Several neighbourhood residents from the Spoorwijk were convinced that a former school building on Alberdingk Thijmplein would become one of the locations for a human service facility. Especially after the fact that the location was on the shortlist was leaked by one of those involved. Neighbourhood residents launched a petition against the feared decision, spread leaflets, and contacted the Municipal Council and the municipal board, to name just a few forms of opposition they mounted (see “Verzet tegen opvang Spoorwijkers kunnen daklozenprobleem er niet meer bij hebben”, 2008; Hesselink, 2008d; Omroep West, 2008). Amongst other things,

over 3.000 signatures were handed over to Van Alphen in protest (the Spoorwijk's total population was about 4.000 - Municipality of The Hague, 2011).

As the responsible alderman, Van Alphen was one of the main targets of the public protests. In online forums, for example, Van Alphen was closely identified with the feared and fiercely disputed location decision, and was for that reason ridiculed by neighbourhood residents (e.g., Spoorwijk.benik.nl, 2008; Denhaagtekijk.blog-city.com, 2008; Mondige Burger, 2008). Such forms of protest were not necessarily representative for the whole neighbourhood community's attitude towards the location decisions and the responsible alderman. At the same time the opposition in the Spoorwijk was widespread. Moreover, the extent to which Van Alphen was identified with the location decision in the Spoorwijk is illustrative for the close coupling of the location decisions and the responsible alderman's person in the perception of neighbourhood residents in other parts of the city, and indeed elsewhere. In interviews conducted for the current research and in public meetings, the location decisions were more closely identified with the alderman than with the board as a whole, the Municipal Council or the municipal government as such. The perceived unreasonableness of the feared location decision mostly reflected on the authority of Van Alphen.

The Spoorwijk situation shows that the authority of an executive is very vulnerable even in the preparatory phases of the location decision, especially if he is confronted with a leak. Public indignation may put an executive behind, even when the location decision has not yet definitively been made.

Immediately after the location decisions, which turned out to 'spare' the Spoorwijk, opposition to the location decision was predictably fierce in the other five neighbourhoods, as was the challenge to Van Alphen's authority as an alderman in this dossier. Neighbourhood residents in the areas that were 'affected' strongly disputed the reasonableness of the location decisions, especially around the Om en Bij and Vinkensteynstraat locations and challenged the authority of alderman Van Alphen in terms of the reasonableness of his decisions. However, in the first two weeks or so after the location decisions, that is, as public meetings were held, neighbourhood residents became less negative about the reasonableness of the location decisions and the opposition slowly but gradually died down, according to Informants (see also Hesselink, 2008a; Municipality of The Hague, 2008f; Van der Bol, 2009).

This proposition is indirectly supported by survey data on neighbourhood residents' attitudes towards the Den Haag Onder Dak facilities in general that were collected after the location decisions were made, but before the opening of the facilities. These attitudes were not the attitudes towards the locations as such, which is of course of particular importance for this thesis, but they may be indicative of citizens' limited challenge to the reasonableness of the location decisions. The underlying data also suggest that at least some citizens have interpreted the question as such because the

motivations that were provided often entail evaluation of location decisions, especially those of negatively or neutrally disposed residents.

Table 14. Neighbourhood residents' attitudes towards the Den Haag Onder Dak facilities

Attitude towards the facility	Average (corrected for # respondents), in %
<i>Positive</i>	31
<i>Neutral</i>	43
<i>Negative</i>	26
<i>Total</i>	100

Source: (WBK Marktonderzoek, 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2010c, 2010d, 2011d), own calculation, N=947

At the time the final interviews for this case study were conducted, that is, autumn 2012, few neighbourhood residents, however, agreed with the location decisions as such. At the same time few actively challenged the reasonableness of the location decisions, provided that the facilities would be managed effectively. Informants generally were able to see why the locations had been chosen.

The [municipal government] has been successful in gaining acceptance for the facility. Neighbourhood residents have acquiesced in it. (...) They can live with it, except that they still have questions about the harm to their social environment.

(Informant 57, neighbourhood resident)

I first thought it was a dubious location, given that it is situated near a small enclosed park, where children play. (...) But at the time I may still have been insufficiently informed about the type of people they wanted to accommodate there.

(Informant 58, neighbourhood resident)

The remaining reticence towards the location decision may partly be explained by the fact that within the management boards, where the implementation of the facilities was discussed with neighbourhood residents, citizens were not allowed to discuss the location decision. Whenever neighbourhood residents disputed the location decision they were reminded that the location decisions had already been made and that the management boards were not the time and place to do so (Informants 41 & 52, senior administrators; personal observation). This meant that some citizens tended to bottle up their frustrations, rather than express them to local government representatives (e.g., Informant 56, neighbourhood resident). Informants, for example, had not

contacted the alderman although some strongly disputed the reasonableness of the location decision.

Others have become genuinely less critical of the reasonableness of the location decisions (e.g., Informants 57 & 58, neighbourhood residents). The Woodstock facility for elderly addicts at the Om en Bij location provides an appealing example. Whereas in the spring of 2008 the Om en Bij location initially caused some of the fiercest opposition compared to the other four locations, by the spring of 2010 neighbours' attitudes towards the facility had changed considerably. Survey research indicates that by March 2010, 75 per cent of neighbourhood residents had a positive attitude towards the facility, compared to 15 per cent in November 2008 (WBK Marktonderzoek, 2008a, 2010a). Again, location seems to be an important aspect of citizens' evaluations because location was often mentioned in the evaluations; a proposition that was corroborated by the interviews conducted for the current study.

In anticipation of the foreseen closure of Woodstock, a group of neighbourhood residents later even launched a petition collecting over 400 signatures in an attempt to prevent Woodstock from being forced to move from its temporary location to a different one (De Jonge, 2010; Brakema, 2010). The initiative generated a substantial amount of media attention and was backed up by the new alderman Rabin Baldewsingh in 2010 (Omroep West, 2010). Although the representativeness of the petition was questioned by some, such as councillor Hasan Küçük, the initiative was generally warmly welcomed (The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2010a).

Still, in general, neighbourhood residents remained rather sceptical about the reasonableness of the location decisions, which also reflected on alderman Van Alphen. With very few exceptions, they would have preferred other locations because they believed those to be more reasonable. In the management board meeting observed in March 2011, which took place more than a year after the location decision was publicly announced, neighbourhood residents living in the vicinity of the Leyweg location, for example, still spoke of Van Alphen with icy contempt with regard to the location decision: "When Van Alphen, in his infinite wisdom, decided to choose the Leyweg, we were stunned" (neighbourhood resident, Marechaussee Kazerne management board meeting 30-03-2011).

Citizen's attitudes to the location decisions, though, contrasted sharply with municipal councillors' attitudes to the location decisions. Not only did the council extensively complement alderman Van Alphen on the execution of the Den Haag Onder Dak policy framework, it was also rather positive about the concrete locations as such, although by forming such a judgement the council exceeded its role as a scrutiniser beyond what was originally agreed upon (see Sections 6.4 and 6.5). Councillors explicitly questioned each other about their opinions about the location *sec* and reported generally positive attitudes.

The result was very positive for alderman Van Alphen. Not only coalition partners PvdA, VVD, and GroenLinks supported the location decision, but also a number of opposition parties. SP “supported the decisions made”, taking into account the difficult circumstances in which they had been made, HSP “could not think of any objections against the locations”, and Solidair Nederland was “satisfied” with the locations (Municipality of The Hague, 2008f). Some councillors, though, made minor critical remarks. The LPF, for example, believed that the Om en Bij and Van Limburg Stirumstraat locations were rather vulnerable. Several others believed that the distribution of facilities across the city could be improved (see Municipality of The Hague, 2008f). The implications of the latter remark, however, mostly concerned the establishment of new facilities after the realisation of the facilities on the five locations that were discussed. Overall, the large majority of the council perceived the location decisions as reasonable, given the argumentation provided by the board.

Interestingly, several councillors portray the board’s decision as a proposal (Municipality of The Hague, 2008f), as if the council still had to approve of the locations as such, which was not the case. The fact that the council eventually did ‘approve’ the decisions underlines the fact that the council fully supported Van Alphen.

What happened? People felt so involved with the issue, also those in the council, that they said: this is a balanced package. It has been thought over carefully and we had input, too. We can all stand behind that as the council.

(alderman Van Alphen)

Thus, whereas the authority of alderman Van Alphen was, at least initially, seriously challenged by neighbourhood residents, the large majority of the Municipal Council did not question the reasonableness of the location decision and thus did not challenge the authority of Van Alphen in this dossier. Arguably, the position of Van Alphen benefitted even from realising the Den Haag Onder Dak facilities; the board showed that it was ‘courageous enough’ to make and enforce such controversial decisions. His position as such, however, is not at the focal point of this thesis. Rather it focuses on the influence of the rendering of account on specific authority in terms of the perceived reasonableness of the location decisions. The following sections will provide an analysis of the The Hague case.

6.4 The Hague’s local executives’ accountability strategies

This section provides an overview of the accountability strategies developed by political-executives in The Hague. To structure the analysis, the model of accountability

from Chapter 3 is used, which consists of the six dimensions 'Who?', 'To whom?', 'For what?', 'With what arguments?', 'How?', and 'When?'.

I: Who rendered account?

Carrying personal responsibility for the Den Haag Onder Dak programme, within the municipal board as well as externally, Van Alphen was also the main accountor for the location decisions. It was generally acknowledged that the alderman was truly devoted to realising the facilities and personally played an important role in doing so (Informants 23, 28, 39, 41, 48, and 52). He pulled the responsibility for the location decisions towards himself, which was a significant part of his accountability strategy. In his relationships with the Municipal Council and neighbourhood residents, Van Alphen wanted to portray himself as the prime leader in the dossier, amongst others by emphasising that *he* carried the main responsibility for the location decisions and that *he* was accountable for them to the Municipal Council.

The aim was twofold. First, Van Alphen wanted to be a clear and recognisable contact for accountees, especially neighbourhood residents and the council, knowing that this would be appreciated by neighbourhood residents.

An advantage in this was that I could directly address people. I knew them, which simply was an advantage. Would it have been Marnix Norder or another alderman here, then it would have been harder. That is all there is to it. (...) It is hugely in the psychological sphere. As a political-executive you need to be responsive, directly approachable, or almost touchable so to speak. It is appreciated that you come and make public these type of decisions yourself. Oftentimes, neighbourhood residents get to hear these things like this via a coordinator or an officer of the municipality, if it has not been communicated to them in writing, etc. That a political-executive now descended from his ivory tower to the city to deliver the bad news, or the supposedly bad messages, too, was appreciated. (...) People called me to account for it. People knew that I had the responsibility for it at the time. I was called to account on the street, at the tobacconist's, wherever.

(alderman Van Alphen)

Second, by putting himself in the line of fire, Van Alphen purposely created room for the municipal administration, the managing directors of the deconcentrated district governments [*stadsdeeldirecteuren*] in particular, to repudiate accountability claims (Informant 46). The managing directors carried special responsibility for the implementation of the facilities in cooperation with neighbourhood residents, once the location decisions were made by the board. In the implementation process, the managing

directors substantially benefitted from not carrying the political responsibility for the location decision and being able to refer neighbourhood residents to the responsible alderman.

What Bert did, and that was excellent, and for that I am still deeply grateful to him, is that he has explained very clearly and understandably how the process worked. (...) I thought it was a very good trade-off that he as the political-executive really took the full responsibility. He literally shouted during that meeting: "The district manager is not responsible for this, but the executive board is responsible." That distinction I badly needed, because subsequently I had to work with this group [of residents]. It needed to be not my decision; I needed the municipal board to take responsibility. [Van Alphen] stood there to really tell his story. He was very clear in that and made it understood.

(Informant 41, senior administrator)

In the rendering of account Van Alphen, on a limited number of occasions, was supported by the mayor Wim Deetman, who carried responsibility for public safety. In a debate with the Municipal Council the mayor, for example, successfully justified the decision not to include a minimum distance between the intended facilities and schools as one of the selection criteria, by defending the clienteles' right to be part of society (Municipality of The Hague, 2007b, pp. 83-84).

Overall though, alderman Van Alphen purposely positioned himself as the main accountor with regard to location decisions in relation to both the Municipal Council and neighbourhood residents. As such, he formed the accountable leader that accountees called for.

II: To whom did local political-executive leaders render account?

With regard to the location decisions for the The Hague Strategy Plan, the municipal board primarily rendered account to the Municipal Council, that is, its formal political accountee. In the policy framework the relationship between the council and the board was characterised as one of accountability in the sense that the council was explicitly appointed as the board's scrutiniser. The board's aim was to avoid council involvement in the location decision-making process and to avoid an image of close consultation or cooperation between council and board. This construction on the one hand granted the municipal board the necessary room to manoeuvre and on the other, upheld the position of the council as the highest body in local government. It meant that the board could make relatively autonomous location decisions and that the council would not evaluate concrete location decisions, other than determining whether they met the predetermined criteria. In this way the accountability relation-

ship provided a firm basis on which board and councillors could rely, upholding their respective responsibilities.

Such a rather distant relationship between board and council may formally be the 'normal' situation in Dutch local government because of how it is organised institutionally, especially given the dualisation (see De Groot *et al.*, 2010), but Van Alphen still believed that because of the highly controversial nature of the location decisions, it was crucial that the nature of the relationship was made explicit in advance and was reinforced by mutual agreement. The way the accountability relationship was shaped absorbed some of the political risk that was embedded in the dossier. On the other hand, taking political feasibility into account in the decision-making was also important in this respect, which qualifies as evidence of a more monistic relationship.

The executive board makes the choice, full stop! And renders account for it. But the choice only comes to be if you have enough support for it in the council. That is a form of concerted action [*samenspel*], where you leave to the council the responsibility to check whether the board has put in practice what you have together agreed upon.

(alderman Van Alphen)

The formal accountability relationship between the board and the council also formed a buffer between the municipal executives and neighbourhood residents. When the latter challenged the location decision, Van Alphen regularly referred them to the Municipal Council as this was the representative body (e.g., Municipality of The Hague, 2010c). Van Alphen held that in the regime of representative democracy, he was accountable only to the Municipal Council (see also Municipality of The Hague, 2010a).

I make the decision, that is also how I said it: "This is the location. I am accountable to the municipal council, which is there for you, for the people; the representation. We will discuss together how we will implement the facility in that neighbourhood and the surroundings." That seems to me a very obvious and clear-cut trajectory.

(alderman Van Alphen)

Even so, Van Alphen recognised the importance of rendering account to neighbourhood residents directly. One of the main aims of his accountability strategy was to explain and justify the location decision to neighbourhood residents, without trying to convince them. Rather, the aim was to show that their interest had been taken seriously and to explain how they played a role in the board's considerations, so that neighbourhood residents would not feel cheated. "Neighbourhood residents do not

need to agree with our choice. It has to be clear, however, for them too, why the choice was made as it was, and people should not feel abandoned by us” (Van Alphen, 2007, p. 10).

Such recognition of citizens’ desire to be rendered account to was not common in the current study. Van Alphen was one of the few local executives to try and honour citizens’ calls for explicit formulation and justification of the decision-maker’s considerations, and to pay attention to the role of the accountees’ interests therein. Not only did Van Alphen perceive his relationship with neighbourhood residents as one of accountability, he also tried to render account to them by justifying the considerations that motivated the location decisions. The extent to which he actually did explain and justify these considerations in substantive terms, however, was limited (see the next sub-section, III).

In addition to the council and neighbourhood residents, that is, the political accountees, the board also rendered account to a variety of social actors, such as residents’ associations and business owners’ associations. The latter mainly challenged the reasonableness of the Zichtenburg location, which was situated in an industrial zone (see Hesselink, 2008c; also Appendix F). Van Alphen also informed The Hague’s homeless in a meeting as early as 2 June 2008, that is, before neighbourhood residents were informed (Municipality of The Hague, 2008d). However, this meeting did not have the nature of rendering account.

The media were also not significant autonomous accountees because they performed the role of reporter rather than that of judge. When explanation and justification to the media took place, of which some examples can be found, e.g., the procedural rendering of account in a newspaper (Hesselink, 2008b), this was targeted towards neighbourhood residents, not the media themselves as autonomous accountees.

Van Alphen, thus, mainly rendered account to the Municipal Council, a selection of neighbourhood residents, and the latter’s spokesmen.

III: For what did local political-executive leaders render account?

The subject of the rendering of account by the The Hague municipal board differs between the two main accountees, that is, the council and neighbourhood residents. These will therefore be discussed separately.

To the council

One of the prime aims Van Alphen had when extensively consulting the Municipal Council with regard to the plan of action for the execution of the Strategy Plan, was to set straight *ex ante* what he was accountable for and what not in his relationship with the Municipal Council. In the experience of Van Alphen, the Van der Vennestraat case had shown that local executives were in a very vulnerable position if the standard(s) by

which their conduct was judged by the council were established *ex post* (Van Alphen, 2007, p. 4; see also Municipality of The Hague, 2007b). For that reason Van Alphen wanted to clearly document the division of responsibilities, including the accountability standards in both substantial and procedural terms.

The criteria that are developed in this memorandum are the standards by which we will be held to account by the council and the city. (...) In the past years experiences in diverse cities have shown that it is important to have a framework by which the actions of the municipality can be judged. In The Hague we as yet lack such a framework.

(Van Alphen, 2007, pp. 2, 4)

By agreeing to the plan of action that was decreed, the Municipal Council gave its assent as to how it would perform its role as scrutiniser of the board in advance. It was agreed that the council would not hold the board to account for concrete location decisions, but only for the extent to which the political-executives acted in accordance with the policy framework that had been decreed. In this way, the accountability for the location decisions as such was replaced by accountability for meeting the predetermined criteria. By ensuring himself of the full and continuous support from the council and by sticking to the criteria in the location decision-making process in principle, Van Alphen consequently did not have to worry too much about being held to account for concrete locations. This accountability strategy allowed Van Alphen to avoid risky debates with the Municipal Council about the locations as such - the council had committed itself to refraining from such discussions.

Nevertheless, the board provided the council an extensive account of the considerations that motivated the location decisions after it made the decisions. Although the board did not provide full insight into the location decisions in the sense that it showed which of the 51 possible locations failed to make it through which selection rounds and why, it did provide a relatively elaborate account of how the location decisions were made in both procedural and substantive terms. The board explained, for example, why it decided to broaden the selection criteria (The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008a) and why it opted for temporary locations (The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008c, p. 3), and provided insight into some of the considerations behind the concrete location decisions, such as the fair distribution of facilities across the city (The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008c, p. 5) and political feasibility (The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008a). It even made explicit four of its main considerations (The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008a), even though these did not necessarily justify concrete location decisions substantively other than by stating that the properties were suitable for their respective intended functions.

Although the rendering of account in this way did not eliminate all of councillors' objections against the location decisions (see Municipality of The Hague, 2008f), it was generally held by councillors that by rendering account the way it did, the board provided sufficient insight into how it made the location decision and what its considerations were. The Municipal Council, as related by the council committee, explicitly stated that it believed that the location decisions were reasonable, although several councillors still expressed their doubts with respect to certain aspects of the location decision, such as their distribution across the city (see Municipality of The Hague, 2008f). Overall, though, by explaining and justifying its location decisions sufficiently the board enabled the council to make an informed judgement on the extent to which the board met the predetermined criteria, as requested by the council (e.g., councillor Lakerveld in Municipality of The Hague, 2007c, p. 8). Enabling the council to do so was in fact one of Van Alphen's goals (see Municipality of The Hague, 2007c, p. 9).

Interestingly, councillors were very much inclined to form and express judgements on concrete locations (see, e.g., Municipality of The Hague, 2008f), although formally this was not the role of the council. This explains why the board made 'political feasibility' one of its considerations. It did not want to lean too heavily on the formal division of tasks or the accountability relationship and risk opposition or jeopardise the location decisions or its authority, and therefore took the council's support into consideration. Nevertheless, the emphasis on the division of tasks and the considerable weight that was attached to the accountability relationship between the board and the council were two of the more important factors in being able to keep the council from becoming actively involved with the location decisions as such.

We first decided on the locations in the executive board. Then we informed the council of the decisions behind closed doors, and at the same time of the entire comparative assessment of how we came to that list, with all the pros and cons, too. That we have discussed with the council. In the end I said: "I have made the decision, I now inform you. You need not give permission."

(alderman Van Alphen)

In the accountability relationship with the Municipal Council, the board as related by Van Alphen, mainly rendered account for honouring the criteria that were predetermined by the council and for some of the considerations that motivated the location decisions. The necessity of substantive rendering of account for concrete locations was more or less eliminated by the mutually agreed upon policy framework. Consequently, the actual locations as such were not extensively rendered account for. Still, the board did make some of its considerations explicit in its communication with the council. What seems to have been more important in explaining the absence of political

controversy, though, is that political feasibility was one of the board's considerations through which it attempted to secure the council's support.

To neighbourhood residents

In September 2007, prior to the decision-making process about the locations, the The Hague local government in cooperation with the care agencies, organised a series of public meetings in each of the districts, in which it informed citizens about the Strategy Plan and its implications. These meetings had multiple purposes. One was to inform citizens about the facilities' clientele. Another was to render account for the social relief policy as such.

Explaining and justifying the broader social relief policy remained an important aspect of the board's accountability strategy in the run-up to and after the location decisions between September 2007 and May 2008. After 27 May 2008, however, the focus shifted towards explaining and justifying the location decisions. The communication strategy aimed at explaining "why the decision was made as it was" (Van Alphen, 2007, p. 10). This seems to entail a full explanation and justification of the location decision in substantive terms, which was in fact one of the main aims: "Purpose of the communication in this phase: (...) is to provide clarity on both the considerations/motivation for this choice and the specific use (what exactly is being established and when)" (The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008b). The explanation and justification of the location decision was a major element of the board's accountability strategy in the sense that it explained and justified to neighbourhood residents why the particular locations were chosen.

In addition, the board regularly rendered account for the procedural aspects of the location decision; it explained why it opted for a NIMBY-procedure (e.g., Municipality of The Hague, 2010c). Neighbourhood residents challenged the directive nature of the decision-making process, claiming that it was wrong to confront neighbourhood residents with accomplished facts and held the alderman to account for it (e.g., Municipality of The Hague, 2008a, 2008c; Municipality of The Hague, 2010c, 2010b). It was in fact one of citizens' main objections (see Hesselink, 2008a; Municipality of The Hague, 2010b).

To sum up, in the accountability relationship between the board and neighbourhood residents the board rendered account for the location decisions in procedural as well as substantive terms. In the rendering of account to neighbourhood residents, the emphasis was on selection and process. The rendering of account for the location decisions was embedded in a broader communication strategy that aimed at justifying the Den Haag Onder Dak policy as such and informing neighbourhood residents about the decisions, their implications, and the future implementation process (see The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008a; Municipality of The Hague, 2010a).

IV: With what arguments did local political-executive leaders render account?

The argumentation by which the board rendered account to the Municipal Council for the location decisions forms a complex mixture of different kinds of arguments, with which the board tried to show that it had made the best decision possible. “Taking everything into consideration, these locations provide the best conceivable result for the expansion of the number of human service facilities for the city’s homeless” (The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008c, p. 4). The argumentation provided boils down to an elaboration of how the board honoured the policy framework and the council’s criteria and a justification of the decision to expand the zoning criterion. In its explanation of the location decisions, the board named four main considerations (The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008a):

- on the whole the selected properties fulfil the need for human service facilities
- the search and selection processes were executed with care
- the selected properties are suitable for their respective future functions
- at the selected locations the surroundings can be effectively managed in terms of public safety

The extent to which these considerations do indeed justify concrete location decisions in terms of a choice between these and alternative locations can be questioned (see also Municipality of The Hague, 2008f). The board, however, did not portray the location decision as such a choice, which made further justification unnecessary: it held that no other locations were available. The main argument was, thus, a situational one. The fact that other arguments, such as the distribution of facilities across the city (The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008c, p. 5), or political feasibility (The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008a), were also mentioned apparently did not induce the council to request further explanation and justification, even though it casted doubt on the non-availability of alternative locations.

Likewise, the substantive justification of concrete location decisions was not common in the rendering of account by the board to neighbourhood residents. The letters in which the location decisions were made public, for example, did not explain or justify the location decisions in substantive terms (e.g., Van Alphen, 2010). Neither was such rendering of account prevalent during the *buurtgesprekken*. Yet, some examples can be found. During the *buurtgesprekken* Van Alphen, for example, held that only these five locations met all the criteria (e.g., Municipality of The Hague, 2008b) and that they were therefore the best options (Municipality of The Hague, 2010b).

Alderman Van Alphen tried to justify taking a directive approach by arguing that citizen participation would make finding suitable locations extremely difficult (e.g.,

Municipality of The Hague, 2008b, 2010c; “Radio 1 Tros Kamerbreed”, 2009) and that he wanted to avoid setting different neighbourhoods against each other (Municipality of The Hague, 2008b; Hesselink, 2008b). The board also wanted to avoid public discussion about locations because these would raise property prices (Municipality of The Hague, 2008b).

To sum up, the arguments with which the board tried to explain and justify the location decisions were mainly situational.

V: How did local political-executive leaders render account?

To the council

The 10 June 2008 council committee meeting was formally the most important setting in which the accountability relationship between the board and the council manifested itself. During the meeting the council committee formed a judgement on the board's conduct in the Den Haag Onder Dak dossier, based on the explanation and justification provided by the board in a written annex to the decision (see The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c) and a discussion with the alderman in the meeting. The committee's positive judgement made it unnecessary to discuss the issue in a council meeting later. The board had already rendered account to the Municipal Council earlier, for some of the preparatory decisions it made in both council and council committee meetings (see, e.g., Municipality of The Hague, 2007b, 2007c).

In addition to these formal meetings, account was rendered to the council and its members in informal settings. These were referred to as “the corridors of city hall” (alderman Van Alphen). As in the Rotterdam and the 's-Hertogenbosch cases, these informal contacts were important accountability mechanisms that functioned as a selection mechanism for calling political-executives to account in a public meeting. As was the case in the other Dutch cities, the accountability mechanisms that operated within the political parties in the The Hague case had considerable informal influence, either directly or because their shadow preceded them.

To neighbourhood residents

The public meetings that followed the 27 May 2008 location decisions, the *buurtgesprekken*, were the main settings in which alderman Van Alphen rendered account for the location decisions to neighbourhood residents, residents' associations, and other local stakeholders such as business owners. In these meetings the alderman tried to explain and justify the location decisions. Prior to the meetings Van Alphen contacted key figures in the neighbourhoods concerned, among others, representatives of neighbourhood associations. Yet, these phone calls did not primarily have the nature of the rendering of account, but rather that of preparing them for the public announcement

of the location decisions and the *buurtgesprekken*, in the hope that as key figures they would be able to channel public protest if necessary.

In addition to rendering account in the *buurtgesprekken*, the rendering of account to neighbourhood residents took place through other more informal mechanisms. With regard to the location decisions, Van Alphen had regular contact with individual citizens, residents' associations, and interest groups such as employers' organisation ZKD, either by phone or in person. Several Informants also mention the receptions that were organised after the public meetings as a context in which account was rendered (e.g., Informant 57, neighbourhood resident; see also Municipality of The Hague, 2008c). Both the alderman and his accountees placed high value on the rendering of account that took place via these informal mechanisms. The special municipal website <http://www.denhaagonderdak.nl> also formed a platform on which the municipal board rendered account to neighbourhood residents (e.g., Municipality of The Hague, 2010b), although less than 10 per cent of them were acquainted with this website (WBK Marktonderzoek, 2009, p. 10; 2010a, p. 10; 2010c, p. 12; 2010d, p. 13).

Overall, the main accountability mechanisms in the accountability relationship between the board and neighbourhood residents were the *buurtgesprekken*, supplemented with some informal contacts.

VI: When did local political-executive leaders render account?

The rendering of account for the location decisions as such to both the Municipal Council and neighbourhood residents mainly took place between the 27 May 2008 board decision and the 10 June 2008 council committee meeting. However, over the course of time the board made several preparatory decisions that had great impact on the location decisions, particularly in preparation of the policy framework. The board, for example, decided early on that it would not involve citizens in the location decision-making process, for which it rendered account in the run-up to the location decision-making. With regard to the location decisions as such, account was rendered only after the 27 May 2008 board decision.

In The Hague as in other Dutch cities, the timing of the public announcement of the location decisions to different forums received particular attention. The board's aim was to inform all (possible) accountees within the shortest possible time frame after the location decision was made (The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008b). As requested by the council committee (Municipality of The Hague, 2007c, p. 12), Van Alphen first personally informed the members of the Social Developments Council Committee in a meeting behind closed doors, in which he explained and justified the location decisions (alderman Van Alphen). Soon thereafter neighbourhood residents, the press, the homeless, and other stakeholders were informed. These initial contacts had the nature of informing those accountees about the decision, rather than render-

ing account for them, but the rendering of account took place within a relatively short period of time after this.

Van Alphen's elaborate explanation and justification in the deliberations *ex ante* seem to have been of a proactive nature. Van Alphen explicitly wanted to proactively convince the board of the reasonableness of the approach he was going to take. The rendering of account to the council committee *ex post* took place at the explicit request of the committee (see Municipality of The Hague, 2007c). The other accountability activities the board conducted, for example, those in relation to neighbourhood residents during the *buurtgesprekken*, were of a more proactive nature since they sprung from the board's explicit wish to inform accountees about its considerations rather than from the board being held to account. This is because the board believed that it was important that neighbourhood residents be aware of these considerations (Van Alphen, 2007; The Hague Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008b). At the start of each *buurtgesprek* Van Alphen explained and justified some of the major choices behind the location decision-making process as well as the location decision itself, in anticipation of neighbourhood residents' questions. Furthermore, the Den Haag Onder Dak website was updated with explanations and justifications of the location decisions soon after these were made. Then again, the initial announcement of the location decisions did not contain explanations or justifications of the location decisions, other than, for example, the press release issued 28 May 2008 (see Municipality of The Hague, 2008e). Overall, the accountability strategy was thus relatively proactive.

6.5 Analysis and conclusions

Van Alphen's approach to the making of controversial location decisions for the Den Haag Onder Dak programme displayed valuable sensitivity to the socio-political context in which he operated. He managed to regain authority by pulling out all the stops. The alderman realised that it was essential to secure the council's full informal support for the programme and therefore closely involved the board in establishing the policy framework. Other than in the first 's-Hertogenbosch case (see Chapter 7), where the council did unanimously agree on the policy framework but lacked full commitment to realising the hostels, irrespective of what locations were chosen as long as they met the predetermined criteria, the The Hague council was truly committed to the policy framework. Van Alphen managed to gain the council's continued commitment to the locations *an sich* as well, by taking into consideration the political feasibility of the locations as well as the potential social opposition to possible locations, and by continually informing the council about the progress of the carefully executed decision-making process.

It should be noted that, other than in the 's-Hertogenbosch (rounds 1 & 2) case, the absence of a threat from municipal elections provided Van Alphen the extra leeway to guide his potentially politically controversial decision through the council, as did the non-occurrence of prolonged social opposition. Making the location decisions well before the municipal elections was indeed one of Van Alphen's considerations.

Van Alphen's accountability strategy was one of the factors that help to explain the fact that the council refrained from interfering with the location decisions after 27 May 2008. In the Den Haag Onder Dak policy framework, council and board agreed that the former would not hold the latter to account with regard to the location decisions as such, but only for the extent to which the locations met the predetermined criteria. The alderman devoted serious effort to ensuring that this agreement was upheld. Thereby, the sting was more or less taken out of the potentially politically controversial location decisions. The substantive accountability for the reasonableness of the location decisions was largely replaced by the procedural accountability for honouring the policy framework.

At the same time, as part of their success in *ex post* rendering account, the The Hague board, other than the two 's-Hertogenbosch boards included in this study, was not hesitant to provide additional substantive explanation and justification for the location decisions once they had been made, in an attempt to convince councillors that they had indeed made the best decisions possible, given the boundary conditions under which the board operated. The board's decision-making document, for example, provided an explicit account of the board's main considerations as a justification for the location decisions. Furthermore, the document as well as the appendices contained substantive justifications of several other considerations that motivated the location decisions. By rendering account in this way, the board anticipated the evaluative questions that were posed by the council, *in casu* committee members, and thereby met the demand for the rendering of account that had been expressed by the council. The board had proactively constructed an account of how and why the location decisions were made as they were that was well-received by the Municipal Council. In the explanations and justifications of the location decisions that were provided, the actual influence of some of the political-strategic aspects of the location decisions may have been underexposed, but the council was satisfied with the account and did not pose further questions or sanction the board in any way. Van Alphen's authority was, thus, not seriously challenged by the Municipal Council, neither before nor after the rendering of account.

Although many of Van Alphen's accountability activities took place in public, the accountability relationships in which he was engaged crucially operated behind the scenes as well. The accountability mechanisms that operated between the board and the council in this controversial dossier showed considerable monistic tendencies: it

was important for the alderman to invest in his relationship with the council and to render account to councillors, also in private. The relevance thereof was strengthened by the fact that party political interests penetrated as far as the board and were accompanied by a chain of accountability: informally the board's members were held accountable by councillors from their political party.

Likewise, a good part of the accountability relationship between the board and neighbourhood residents, residents' associations, business owners, and so forth operated along informal mechanisms. The importance of these accountability mechanisms has been emphasised by both local executives and neighbourhood residents. These mechanisms, however, did not necessarily penetrate into the heart of each local community. Many neighbourhood residents were not rendered account to, but neither did they have a strong desire to be rendered account to.

The executive board seems to have rendered account to neighbourhood residents well enough to convince a critical mass of the reasonableness of the location decisions. At the same time there was no ubiquitous support of the location decisions. By contrast, several neighbourhood residents simply resigned themselves to the decisions; they gave up the fight. Still, by rendering account for the location decisions in both substantial and procedural terms, the board had convinced enough neighbourhood residents of the reasonableness of the location decision to avoid further public protest. All in all, Van Alphen successfully countered the challenge to his authority that was embedded in the initial public protest against the location decisions. Although in the eyes of neighbourhood residents in particular, his authority has not fully restored, Van Alphen appreciably rose to the challenge.

In his relationship with citizens, Van Alphen benefitted from a two-sided approach. On the one hand, he emphasised and honoured the regime of the representative democracy. He positioned the location decisions as an almost exclusively executive responsibility and did not provide citizens the opportunity to participate in the decision-making because of it allegedly being a NIMBY dossier. Van Alphen in that way created a power distance between himself and neighbourhood residents that allowed him to avoid having to get citizens' approval. Critical citizens were referred to their councillors as their representatives in a representative democracy. On the other hand, Van Alphen honoured the direct, political accountability relationship between himself and neighbourhood residents and tried to compensate the power distance through a personal approach and informal contacts in which he was ready and willing to explain and justify the location decisions.

Overall, in the Den Haag Onder Dak dossier, Van Alphen positioned himself as a political-executive leader, as the one actor that was politically responsible for the controversial location decisions, thereby relieving others such as care agencies or the managing directors of the deconcentrated district governments of the political burden to

defend the location decisions. At the same time he was an accountable leader that was willing to explain and justify his considerations. Crucially, though, his accountability relationship with the council, and to a lesser extent his relation with neighbourhood residents as well, was more of a procedural nature than of a substantive nature, which took the sting out of the potentially controversial dossier: he explained the location decision in procedural terms, rather than in terms of values, with which the board was satisfied. The alderman's ability to uphold this construction benefitted from the absence of a threat from municipal elections and from making less controversial decisions.

Table 15. Findings for The Hague

Relevant case characteristics	Sub-categories	Findings
<i>Initial challenge to authority</i>	<i>Political</i>	Weak challenge
	<i>Social</i>	Weak-significant challenge
<i>Characteristics of the accountability strategy</i>	<i>Who?</i>	Strong individual political accountability
	<i>To whom?</i>	Political and social orientation
	<i>For what?</i>	Selection and process
	<i>With what arguments?</i>	Situational argumentation
	<i>How?</i>	Direct and indirect, formal, and informal
	<i>When?</i>	Proactive
<i>Rise to the challenge to authority</i>	<i>Political</i>	Moderate improvement
	<i>Social</i>	Moderate improvement
<i>Relevance of the rendering of account</i>		Limited-substantial

7

's-Hertogenbosch (rounds 1 & 2): In case of fire

'To listen' does not always mean 'saying yes'. That is something I find a bit warped in the Netherlands. If you then take a different decision, you have to talk the hind legs off a donkey to explain why it is different.

(alderman Eugster)

On Friday 15 February 2008 the municipal executive of the Dutch city of 's-Hertogenbosch publicly announced its decision to establish a service facility for homeless addicts with a psychological disorder in a former office building on the Churchillaan (see "Hostel verslaafde daklozen aan Churchillaan", 2008). The facility was meant to become the first of five *hostels* in the city, which were part of a nationwide initiative to combat homelessness in the Netherlands. The decision was supposed to be final; there was to be no debate over the location, and the hostel was supposed to be realised on the designated location as soon as possible. This was because the 2006-2010 's-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen regarded the location decision as an administrative matter, as something for which the responsibility lay with the executive. It was to be only a matter of implementation. Neither the council nor residents would be involved in the decision-making ('s-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008). The executive showed directive leadership by taking and forcing through the decision to establish the hostel in the face of fierce social opposition, by not involving citizens in the location decision-making process, and by informing rather than consulting the Municipal Council, to the dismay of both citizens and councillors. However, the result turned out very differently from what the municipal executive had hoped. The intended facility burned down as a result of arson, and the hostel would not be realised for at least three and a half years, or at that particular location. In 2009, a second attempt to realise two hostels also ended in vain because the Municipal Council *de facto* overruled the board's location decisions. Moreover, the 's-Hertogenbosch executive board's authority, particularly alderman Jetty Eugster's, was strongly challenged over the hostel issue. This chapter provides a case study report and analyses how local political-executive leaders' accountability strategies failed to counter this challenge to authority.

7.1 The hostels: a short history

On Friday 15 February 2008 neighbourhood residents living in the vicinity of Churchilllaan 77 received a letter from the care agencies Reinier van Arkel Group and Novadic-Kentron. In the letter the care agencies announced that, together with the municipal administration, they had decided to establish a hostel for homeless addicts with a psychological disorder in a former office building in Churchilllaan. The announcement of the location decision instantly caused turmoil in the surrounding neighbourhood, called 'De Kruiskamp'. Neighbourhood residents strongly opposed the location decision and soon resorted to a multitude of juridical, political, and social means to voice their opposition. Individual residents sought cooperation with others and formed protest movements, launched websites, contacted councillors, the municipal administration and the media, and consulted lawyers in an attempt to object to the decision (see Van Gorkum, 2008b). And so did their representatives: the local neighbourhood council [*wijkraad*] requested the municipal government redo the decision-making procedure, this time with citizens' involvement, and political party groups in the Municipal Council filed written questions for the municipal executive. On Wednesday 20 February 2008 several hundred residents attended a tumultuous public meeting, in which mayor Ton Rombouts and the then alderman Jetty Eugster tried to explain why the municipal board had chosen that particular location (Van Gorkum, 2008a; Huibers & Van Gorkum, 2008). However, by no means did they succeed in their goal to create understanding for the location decision. Public opposition was fierce, before and after the meeting. Neighbourhood residents could not be convinced of the reasonableness of the location decision. Neither did the executives convince the neighbourhood council the next day, although the atmosphere was somewhat more constructive.

On the night of Friday the 22nd, two days after the public meeting, the building that was intended to house the hostel burned down as a result of arson. And although those responsible have never been arrested, which makes it impossible to definitively establish the motive, it was widely assumed that the fire was an extreme form of public protest against the establishment of the hostel, especially since threats to that effect had been expressed in the meeting two days earlier (Huibers & Van Gorkum, 2008; Van Gorkum, 2009). The fire marked the end of the plan to establish a hostel in Churchilllaan. The building had to be written off and the municipal executive decided not to rebuild it, but to look for another location in another neighbourhood, outside De Kruiskamp. According to the municipal board, the motivation for this decision was that it wanted to show that it had the nerve to include socio-economically less vulnerable areas in their search as well (e.g., Informant 38, alderman). Yet, many others interpreted the decision to spare the area as a sign of weakness (e.g., Informants 27, 60,

Table 16. Timeline 's-Hertogenbosch (rounds 1 & 2)

ROUND ONE	
02 October 2007	Policy document <i>Wonen voor bijzondere doelgroepen</i>
18 December 2007	Location decision Churchilllaan
22 January 2008	Letter to the Municipal Council
15 February 2008	Public announcement
20 February 2008	Public meeting
21 February 2008	Meeting with the <i>Wijkraad</i>
22 February 2008	Arson in the intended facility
26 February 2008	Accountability debate
04 March 2008	Social Affairs Council Committee meeting
ROUND TWO	
09 April 2008	Council committees meeting
27 January 2009	Unanimous Municipal Council agreement on policy framework
09 February - 10 March 2009	Public meetings in 11 neighbourhoods
24 March - 12 June 2009	Location decision-making
23 June 2009	Provisional location decision
25 June 2009	Sounding board advice
30 June 2009	Location decision by the municipal board
01 July 2009	Informal council committee meeting
01 July 2009	Public announcement
06 & 07 July 2009	Public meetings
09, 10, 13 & 14 July 2009	Management board meetings
01 - 14 July 2009	Social upheaval
Throughout July 2009	Informal meetings with neighbourhood residents
18 September 2009	LHR, RB, SK private members' proposal
22 September 2009	Motion 'Smaller hostels'
16 October 2009	Visit Hans Spekman
10 November 2009	Board's reaction to the LHR, RB, SK proposal
01 & 02 December 2009	Social Affairs Council Committee meeting
15 December 2009	Unanimous council motion 'Hostels'

and 71). National newspaper *de Volkskrant* concluded that it had paid off for residents to take justice into their own hands (Meerhof, 2005): those responsible for the fire had managed to keep the hostel out of De Kruiskamp.

However, the fire by no means marked the end of the turmoil in 's-Hertogenbosch with regard to the hostels. The municipal government was still committed to establishing the hostels and started up a new location decision-making process by drawing up a policy framework between spring 2008 and winter 2009. By early 2009, the municipal government's aim was to realise five hostels between 2009 and 2014. At the outset of the procedure, the Municipal Council set the conditions for the board's search for loca-

tions as well as for the trajectory that would lead to the establishment of the hostels. On 27 January 2009, almost a year after the De Kruiskamp fire, the Municipal Council of 's-Hertogenbosch unanimously agreed upon the policy framework for the selection of locations for five hostels throughout the city (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009g). It contained the criteria for the locations as well as the outline for the selection procedure. It was agreed that, given the location criteria as approved by the council, the location decision itself was to be an administrative matter, that is, something for which the responsibility lay with the executive. This fits with the institutional makeup of Dutch local government. After all, in the institutional structure of Dutch local government it is the council's task to formulate general policy principles and guidelines; the executive is supposed to implement these (De Groot *et al.*, 2010, p. 405). By unanimously agreeing to the policy framework, the council formally committed itself to the realisation of the hostels and the location decision-making process.

The second location decision trajectory started off with eleven public meetings throughout the city, in the different neighbourhoods of 's-Hertogenbosch. These meetings were meant to outline the decision-making procedure, to 'warm the hearts' of the inhabitants, and to ask them to name possible locations for the hostels. They took place in early 2009. In total roughly 750 citizens attended the meetings (the 2009 's-Hertogenbosch population was 137,775 - CBS, 2011). Between 24 March and 23 June the municipal administration assessed the available locations, which led to provisional location decisions for two possible locations for the first two hostels. During that time the executive regularly informed the council and inhabitants about the progress through various communication channels, such as letters to the council and via the local media. Also, there were three meetings with a group of twelve residents from across the city who acted as a sounding board and who judged the soundness of the decision-making process. Their advice, which was not meant to be an advice on locations (although the participating residents included a passage that can be regarded as such), dates from 25 June 2009. Soon thereafter, on 1 July, the municipal Board of Mayor and Aldermen selected the locations for the first two hostels. It chose Geert Grootestraat 31/Brugmanstraat 8/8a and Henri Bayensstraat 3.

The location decision was made public on 1 July 2009, which was according to schedule (see Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009b). On the same day the executive organised a closed, informal meeting with the Social Developments Council Committee, during which alderman Eugster explained how the location decision was made and why it was made as it was.

Shortly after the first announcement of the location decisions, public meetings were held with residents that lived close to the intended locations. These took place on 6 and 7 July 2009. Also, meetings were held with a number of residents that had opted for the 'management boards' [*beheergroepen*], in which the conditions were to be

discussed under which the accommodations could be realised and could continue to operate. In addition, members of the executive board as well as local bureaucrats held personal meetings with a number of residents that had voiced their disagreement with the location decisions (Informant 27, senior administrator). A number of similar measures were initiated by the board and the municipal administration: special telephone office hours were held, there was a special e-mail address for residents through which they could voice their comments, there was a separate meeting for elderly people that lived nearby one hostel location, etcetera (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009d).

Despite these measures, the location decisions again caused substantial turmoil throughout the neighbourhoods that were involved. Residents organised protests, founded action committees (e.g., www.stophostelsdenbosch.nl), and contacted aldermen, councillors, and local media. The turmoil reached its peak in September 2009, but there had already been something brewing since the first of July. Still, both executives and councillors did not expect the level of opposition the location decisions encountered (see Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009d). Nevertheless, the executive board stood firm: it held that the location decisions had been made and that these would not be the subject of debate:

Mayor Rombouts: "The decision has been made definitively. It will not be overturned." (...)

Resident: "Is there a possibility to review the decision?"

Alderman Eugster: "No, the decision cannot be revised."

(in Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009h)

Eventually though, the two hostels were not realised on these locations, contrary to the intentions of the municipal executive. This was because, in the end, the Municipal Council decided that it was not content with the locations and the level of opposition they had generated. The continuous social opposition in the months July 2009 up to December 2009, which included all kinds of protests, such as protest marches, led to a situation in which the Municipal Council believed that the location decisions were untenable. Slowly but surely, the council's support for the concrete location decisions faded.

What was particularly problematic for alderman Eugster was that one of the councillors of 'her own' CDA political party group, Huib van Olden, as early as 14 July 2009, supported a motion that was proposed by the two opposition parties: Bosch Belang and Rosmalens Belang, and that *de facto* required a new location decision-making process. Although the motion was rejected by the majority of the council, Van Olden's vote was a clear sign of cracks in the governing coalition. With the March 2010 municipal elections in view, the CDA was at a loss what to do with the hostels and it feared electoral

losses. Over the course of time, the cracks within the governing coalition widened under the pressure of strong popular opposition.

Public protest was fuelled by a visit to 's-Hertogenbosch by former municipality of Utrecht alderman Hans Spekman on 16 October 2009. Coalition member PvdA had invited Spekman, who had successfully realised nine human service facilities in Utrecht, to 's-Hertogenbosch hoping that he would give an impetus to the realisation of the hostels ("DEN BOSCH-ZUID - Politicus Spekman bezoekt hostel Zuid", 2009, also Informant 63). Instead, Spekman turned against the hostel in Geert Grootestraat. Although he did not dispute the reasonableness of the location decision itself, he held that the hostel was too big and that neighbourhood residents had not been properly involved in the decision-making (Van Lith, 2009b). Spekman's visit was a blow to the PvdA and to the municipal executives. It formed one of the turning points in the hostels dossier.

Another crucial event was the 1 December 2009 Social Affairs Council Committee meeting in which 23 people made use of their right to speak and voiced their opposition against the hostels (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009f). Up till then, neighbourhood residents had already put immense pressure on individual councillors to give in. The committee meeting formed the final step in the process in which the coalition members gave up their support for the location decisions.

Two weeks later, on 15 December 2009, the executive's decision was effectively overruled by the council through a unanimous motion that requested the board to redo the location decision-making procedure. This latter process, which, using the metaphor of 'rounds of complex decision-making' developed by Teisman (1992), can be considered to be round 3 in the location decision-making process, started after the March 2010 municipal elections and under the guidance of a new alderman: Rodney Weterings. It will be discussed in the next chapter. The current chapter focuses on the first two rounds, in which Eugster was the alderman responsible.

7.2 Not overcoming opposition

Between 2007 and 2010 several factors contributed to the failure of the hostel policy in terms of enforcing it and overcoming opposition. One of these was that the council eventually receded from the original policy framework, notwithstanding the fact that it had unanimously agreed upon it in January 2009. By the end of 2009 the council required greater citizens' involvement than in the policy framework it had established at the beginning of 2009. To put it bluntly: the council changed the rules during the game so that it could re-enter alternative locations in the location decision-making process, which substantially postponed the establishment of the hostels. The council extended its role as a scrutiniser beyond the original policy framework because it was

not satisfied with the locations that had come out of the procedure, or rather, with the level of social opposition they generated.

A second factor that contributed to the failure was the limited availability of financial means to implement the facilities and the lack of commitment to and even resistance against the hostels amongst senior local bureaucrats. These facts were aggravated by the time pressure that stemmed from AWBZ regulations. A bigger budget and more dedication in the municipal administration would have made it easier for the executive to pick other locations, or to facilitate the implementation of the facilities on the locations it chose (Informants 27, 38, and 47). The context in which Eugster tried to establish the hostels, especially with the municipal elections coming up, was very unfavourable to say the least.

Third, 's-Hertogenbosch' inhabitants were strongly convinced that such human service facilities should not be established on residential estates and also that they should have had a say in the location decision.

A fourth factor was that Eugster was so dedicated to realising the hostels that she displayed too little sensitivity to the socio-political context in which she operated. Amongst others, Eugster kept too much distance from neighbourhood residents in the days following the 1 July 2009 location decision. Furthermore, she became aware of opposition within her own political party and of the shifting balance in the Municipal Council too late. Long before Eugster cooperated with the initiative to start a new location decision-making process, she had lost her authority in her relationship with the council and neighbourhood residents.

A last factor, which is particularly relevant for this thesis, was that the board communicated in a way that did not satisfy accountees. This reproach refers to a variety of aspects of the board's conduct. It refers, for example, to an alleged lack of opportunities for citizens to influence the location decision. Consider: "The communication [by the executive] was of a too strong one-way nature, towards inhabitants as well as the council. Stakeholders, as well as the council have no say in the [the location decision]" (councillor in reference to the announcement of Churchilllaan facility, in Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2008a, p. 7).

Alternatively, 'communication' was used by accountees to refer to things that may look trivial to an outsider, such as the fact that the letter in which the intended Churchilllaan facility was announced to neighbourhood residents was signed by the care agencies involved, not by the local government (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2008a, pp. 3-4). The impact of the latter on the attitudes of neighbourhood residents and councillors towards the hostel, however, should not be underestimated. Some Informants even claimed that it was one of the main causes of all turmoil (Informant 65, also Informant 64). Similarly, the fact that several residents received a letter that was meant for residents of another area, which consequently informed them about the

wrong location decision, created bad blood. The importance of such ‘trivial’ phenomena can thus be considerable, which makes it difficult to trace back the influences of different aspects.

The relative impact of these five factors that contributed to the failure of the hostel policy is hard to establish. This, however, is not the main aim of this thesis. Rather, this study focuses on one particular aspect of communication, or rather on one particular social relationship of which the communicative aspects are of utmost importance: the accountability relationship between local political-executive leaders and their accountees. Section 7.5 provides an analysis thereof based on Section 7.4, which describes the accountability strategies of the political-executive leaders involved. First, though, Section 7.3 analyses to what extent authority was challenged and regained.

7.3 Challenge to authority

By the beginning of 2010 there had been two failed attempts to find locations for the hostels in 's-Hertogenbosch. The intended Churchillaan hostel burned down and the subsequent location decisions were rejected by the council. The course of events naturally left a mark on the municipal government as a whole, most notably the executive board. The authority of alderman Eugster was challenged in particular.

Councillors, senior administrators, and neighbourhood residents generally admired Eugster's personal commitment and her dedication to establishing the hostels (several Informants). Evidently, they reported, the alderman's heart was in the matter of taking care of the hostels' clientele. The alderman's devotion was well-appreciated. It seems, though, that under the difficult circumstances under which the alderman had to realise the hostels (e.g., resistance among senior local bureaucrats, limited financial means, pressure of time, upcoming municipal elections), the personal dedication of the alderman backfired because it was perceived as being a headstrong, uncompromising attitude. Soon after the public announcement of the location decision, alderman Eugster came under fierce criticism from both residents and councillors for the perceived unreasonableness of the location decisions, the directive nature of the process in which they had been made, and for the way in which she handled the continuation of the debate in the months following the second round of the location decision-making process (e.g., Van Lith, 2009a).

The relationship between Eugster and the Municipal Council suffered substantially from the hostels dossier (see also Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010f, p. 39). Informants from the Municipal Council, from the coalition and the opposition, as well as members of the executive, state that Eugster's position as an alderman weakened considerably as a consequence of the failure to establish the hostels and the inability to

convince others of the reasonableness of the location decisions. The hostels dossier reinforced the challenge to authority that was posed to Eugster about a number of other controversial dossiers, such as the paving of the market square in 's-Hertogenbosch (Informants 62, 63, and 64, councillors). Consequently, the hostels dossier posed a serious challenge to her political authority in her relationship with the Municipal Council.

She lost her authority in the hostels dossier to a large extent, relatively speaking. At some point she was the doormat.

(Informant 27, senior administrator)

This dossier made clear in all respects that she was incapable of managing these issues political-executively. (...) She [eventually] no longer had the authority to bring this sensitive dossier to a good ending. (...) It has cost Eugster her political head. On top of a number of other dossiers this was just too much.

(Informant 62, councillor)

Senior administrators were critical of Eugster's authority in the hostels dossier as well. They claim that Eugster lacked the power to bring the hostels dossier to a good end, especially in the later stages of the process (Informants 27 & 47).

The authority of the alderman was strongly challenged by social actors as well. In the months following the location decisions, their reasonableness was strongly challenged by neighbourhood residents. In interviews, conducted in 2010 and 2011, neighbourhood residents and others condemned the alderman's decision in strong terms. Geert Grootestraat and Henri Bayensstraat were simply viewed as being very bad locations for hostels, particularly because of being too close to residential buildings. Neighbourhood residents and councillors strongly disagreed with the location decisions, which they perceived as being eminently unreasonable. They characterise the location decisions as being particularly bad ones (Informants 27, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 71, 72, 73, and 74). Admittedly, some were a bit more nuanced, though: "The Henri Bayensstraat location was not that bad" (Informant 63, councillor).

Although most neighbourhood residents and councillors recognised that Eugster was well disposed towards the hostels' clientele, that her heart was in the matter and that she was dedicated to realising the hostels, they were critical of her acts as an alderman and continually disputed the reasonableness of 'her' location decisions. What was also reckoned against the alderman was the fact that citizens allegedly had a very limited role in the decision-making process. Many also characterised Eugster's attitude as "too directive", or even "imperious" [*regentesk*] (e.g., Informants 60, 61, 71, and 72). The alderman's distance from citizens and their concerns, as they perceived it, thus

appears to have had a strong influence on neighbourhood residents' attitudes towards the alderman.

Her conviction was: "I should not get involved in that." She has very deliberately remained aloof. (...) She was not responsive or accessible. She reacted to nothing. (...) And she kept doing that, despite it causing a great deal of commotion. She really was portrayed as the alderman who would not play ball as regards dossiers that affected the citizen. This distance between Eugster and the citizen was very strongly emphasised, in the media too.

(Informant 71, neighbourhood resident)

The effect of the perceived distance between residents and the alderman was particularly strong since Eugster was closely identified with the hostels, and especially with the location decisions made in her time. The observations made during meetings etcetera, in round 3 of the location decision-making process corroborate this observation. The way residents spoke of Eugster, especially in informal conversations among themselves, suggested profound distrust of the former alderman, right up to the autumn of 2011, which was almost a year after Eugster's role in the hostels dossier was effectively played out (personal observation in management board meetings).

Already in round 2, during the later phases of the decision-making process citizens, councillors and others openly questioned the position of the alderman (e.g., Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009f). The failure of the hostel policy by the large majority of Informants is, partly at least, attributed to Eugster's inability to convince neighbourhood residents of the reasonableness of the location decisions and to the negative effect of her personal performance in relation to the hostel issue. By the end of 2009 many neighbourhood residents as well as councillors and senior administrators had become convinced that Eugster's position in the hostels dossier had been weakened beyond repair.

In an interview conducted for the current study, Eugster recognised that she bore the consequences of the failure of the hostel policy, with which she was strongly identified by others. As a result, she was unable to counter the challenge to her authority in this dossier, which rendered her unable to enforce the location decisions in the end. Citizens and councillors disputed the reasonableness of the location decisions to such an extent that they effectively forced the board to redo the location decision-making process. In Eugster's own perception she retained her diffuse authority as an alderman since the Municipal Council did not send her off and continued to support other policy proposals. This would suggest that specific authority does not necessarily affect diffuse authority. Several Informants, however, suggested that Eugster had lost her diffuse authority as an alderman as such also as a consequence of losing her specific authority

in the hostels dossier (Informants 27, 44, 62, 63, 64, 71, and 75), which suggests that the challenge to authority in the hostels dossier affected the alderman's authority in other dossiers and *vice versa*.

In the analysis of Eugster herself, of several of Informants (27, 62, 63, 64, and 75), and of several media (e.g., Hagemans, 2010; Omroep Brabant, 2010), the apparent failure of the hostel policy and the alderman's alleged misconduct were among the main reasons why Eugster did not return as a candidate alderman after the 2010 municipal elections. Although it proved impossible to fully reconstruct the true reasons beyond doubt, it was generally held that the hostels dossier had a strong influence on the decision of the alderman's party's leadership to opt for another candidate alderman.

Many accountees, thus, held that the alderman had lost authority in her relation with councillors, and inhabitants and within her own political party. What is more, over the course of time the hostel issue had become such a controversial, politicised issue that it affected the functioning of the 's-Hertogenbosch government as a whole. According to senior administrators, councillors, and members of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, by 2010 the administration's authority had come to depend on this dossier. This view was shared by *Brabants Dagblad*, an influential local newspaper, which had been deeply engaged on the hostel issue ever since 2008 (see Stadsredactie Brabants Dagblad, 2010). The hostels had become one of the issues that dominated the political agenda and that was surrounded with negative sentiments. Eugster's successor, Weterings, expressed it in this way: "The board's authority and credibility are on the line here."

7.4 's-Hertogenbosch' (rounds 1 & 2) local executives' accountability strategies

[disappointed] But I still thought: "It must be possible to sufficiently explain this. [The suitability of these locations], we *can* explain to one another."

(alderman Eugster)

This section provides an overview of the accountability strategies employed by political-executive leaders in the 's-Hertogenbosch case before the 2010 municipal elections. It also indicates how these contributed to the loss of authority by the executive. To structure the analysis, the model of accountability from Chapter 3 is used, which consists of the six dimensions 'Who?', 'To whom?', 'For what?', 'With what arguments?', 'How?', and 'When?'.

I: Who rendered account?

The fact that the intended establishment of a hostel in Churchillaan was communicated to immediate residents through a letter from the care agencies Reinier van Arkel Group and Novadic-Kentron, and not from the municipal executive was and still is held strongly against the latter. Many neighbourhood residents have interpreted this as an unwillingness of the local government to take responsibility and recognise accountability for the location decision, which was widely regarded as a notable mistake (see, e.g., Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2008a, p. 5). Although mayor Rombouts and alderman Eugster rendered account for the location decision in the days that followed the announcement, damage to the position of the municipal executive had already been inflicted. Neighbourhood residents as well as the Municipal Council believed that the municipal board had not respected its responsibilities with regard to such a controversial decision.

During round 2 of the location decision-making process Eugster on a number of occasions again struggled with the division of responsibilities; this time between her and, respectively, the municipal administration and mayor Rombouts. First, when she handed over the implementation process to the municipal administration in July 2009, she was criticised for taking her hands off the hostels too early since they had become so controversial. “She did not communicate. She crawled away, while she had the say over the choice of the location and she had to render account for it. (...) She was not really the figurehead” (Informant 27, senior administrator).

Second, in the experience of Eugster herself and others (e.g. Informant 82, senior administrator), mayor Rombouts on several occasions, such as the 6 July public meeting, held too prominent a place, which meant that Eugster as the responsible alderman somewhat faded into the background. As the responsible alderman she lacked visibility (Van den Berg, Flierman & Hanemaayer, 2011, p. 10).

Although the other members of the board emphasised their collective responsibility for the location decisions as well, not only in their relationship with the council, but also in meetings with neighbourhood residents (e.g., Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009h), and also rendered account on a number of occasions, the collective accountability was not strong enough to counter the challenge to the individual authority of Eugster.

Of course, the mayor was also present. But, in his perception he had a different role to play. He tried to take on the role of ‘father of the citizens’ [*burgervader*]. It was the alderman who defended the decision.

(Informant 82, senior administrator)

The board's accountability strategy lacked a clear focus on individual or collective accountability, which meant that the accountees lacked a clear addressee. Consequently, Eugster became the prime target of reproach against the reasonableness of the location decisions. It was held by Informants that Eugster did not receive the necessary backing from the other members of the board and that she was hesitant to seek out such backing (e.g., Informant 27, senior administrator).

Further, in some cases local bureaucrats participated in meetings with individual residents, rather than members of the executive board. They too explained and justified the location decisions to neighbourhood residents, being the figureheads of the hostel policy in the absence of Eugster. This too diffused accountability, to the dismay of neighbourhood residents, who believed that the executives had to render account rather than senior administrators.

To summarise, for both neighbourhood residents and councillors Eugster was the main accountor in the hostels dossier, but she was not there often enough to answer their calling to account. She was not the undisputed accountor in relation to the location decision, which led to an unclear distribution of responsibilities and the lack of a clear addressor in the accountability relationship between neighbourhood residents and the municipal executive.

II: To whom did local political-executive leaders render account?

In the case of the hostels, 's-Hertogenbosch' local political-executive leaders rendered account to two forums in particular: a) neighbourhood residents and b) the Municipal Council. Looking at the 'To whom?' dimension of the accountability strategies two time periods can be distinguished, 15 February 2008 till 30 June 2009 and 1 July 2009 till 15 December 2009.

15 February 2008 till 30 June 2009

The rendering of account to neighbourhood residents starts off at a public meeting with residents and other stakeholders on 20 February 2008, five days after the first location decision. In this meeting alderman Eugster and mayor Rombouts not only informed residents about the intended establishment of the hostel, but also informed citizens about their considerations and tried to explain and justify the location decision to them. This, however, was only a minor element of the public meeting, which primarily had the nature of informing immediate residents about the facility and its inhabitants and of providing residents the opportunity to express their concerns. The rendering of account to inhabitants continued in the council meeting of 26 February 2008, but soon grinded to a halt when it became apparent that the building was no longer available and the board was looking for a new location.

The same goes for the rendering of account to the council, which primarily took place in that particular council meeting. After that it took over a year before accountability activities could be witnessed again. This was because the second location decision was not made before June 2009. In the intervening months, the board informed councillors and residents about the progress in the decision-making process on several occasions, but none of these sources of information contained an explanation or justification of the future location decision. There were documents that explained and justified the hostel policy as such, for example, the 2009 policy framework (see Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009g). These, however, cannot be considered to be documents in which account was rendered.

The first reason was that the Municipal Council still had to approve of the policy framework, which by definition made it impossible for the board to render account to the council through the document. The second reason concerned the substance of the document. One could be inclined to view the policy framework as a document in which the board and the council together rendered account for the hostel policy to inhabitants. There is some truth to this statement because the document does explain and justify the hostel policy. This, however, is of limited relevance to the current research because it focuses on the rendering of account by the executive as regards the location decisions and not the hostel policy in general. With regard to the location decisions, the document contained very little rendering of account. Although the document contained a high number of selection criteria for the hostel locations, and was thus very informative, the 'Why?' of these criteria was rarely provided. Hence, the document did not function as an explanation or a justification. No more than two criteria, out of about 20 in total, came with an underpinning: a) the choice not to locate the facilities in the inner city because the area already locates a high number of human service facilities, and b) the choice to spare vulnerable areas because of their low ratings on public safety. The other criteria were simply stated as criteria without justification. Similar observations can be made with regard to the information meetings for residents in early 2009. Although these were informative, they were not meant to render account for future location decisions.

To summarise, in the time period between 15 February 2008 and 30 June 2009, local executives mainly rendered account to the Municipal Council and neighbourhood residents. Other accountees, such as local media, were not rendered account to. Media reports of that period contained no explanation or justification of the location decision that can be attributed to local executives.

1 July 2009 till 15 December 2009

Having made the location decision public on 30 June 2009, the board sent out a press release on 1 July. In the document the board made public its decision to locate hos-

tels in Geert Grootestraat and Henri Bayensstraat (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009b). The board placed the location decision in the context of the broader hostel policy, explained the decision-making process, and informed residents about their future role in the management board. Residents were also invited to two public meetings and their attention was drawn to the telephone office hours, set up for questions about the hostels.

This press release should not be regarded as an act of rendering account to either neighbourhood residents or the media. Whereas the document was very informative about the decision and the decision-making process, it remained rather factual. The text did not contain any explanation or justification of the location decision in the normative sense, other than the statement that these two locations were “the best available options” for realising the hostels in the short term (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009b, p. 1). The document contained virtually no explanation of the ‘Why?’ of the location decisions. This may be explained by the fact that explaining the considerations that motivated the location decisions was not an element in the communication strategy adopted by the board, nor was their justification (see 's-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2009a).

Also on 1 July 2009 the board held a closed meeting with the Social Developments Council Committee to discuss the location decisions. In this meeting, the responsible alderman rendered account for the location decision.

I just told the story. I said: such and such we have interpreted the policy framework, and this and that has come out of it. I have explained the whole process once more, after January, based on the council's proposal. And in fact I have in a way rendered account of how we had followed it through, what we had done, and these and those locations had come out of it. And that the board had also decided to accept these too.

(alderman Eugster)

In the days immediately following the public announcement of the locations, the board mainly rendered account to neighbourhood residents and the media. In the accountability relationship with inhabitants, public meetings with different groups of residents were important accountability mechanisms. During these meetings, citizens often called aldermen Eugster and Geert Snijders and mayor Rombouts to account for the location decisions. The former required board members to provide explanations of and justifications for the location decisions, in addition to information about the location decision. The ‘Why here?’ question received considerable attention during these meetings. For example, in a public meeting on 6 July 2009 the chairman of a residents' association asked alderman Eugster to explain why the board had chosen

the Geert Grootestraat location when several agencies, such as the police, had more positively advised the board on other locations (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009h). Examples like these can be found throughout the minutes of such meetings. The alderman and senior administrators report similar experiences from personal meetings with residents; the holding to account and the rendering of account did occur in these meetings. Neighbourhood residents required the executives involved to explain and justify the location decision and the latter tried to convince the former of the reasonableness thereof:

Then you explain it once again in order that people get detailed insight into how we have followed though the process and why we have then chosen these [locations] and that we have agreed with the Municipal Council that we would work like this.

(alderman Eugster)

The rendering of account for the location decisions was also an element in different, more informal meetings between members of the board and individual residents, and other forms of direct communication between the two.

However, explanation and justification were not dominant aspects of the communication, which mainly aimed at informing neighbourhood residents about the decision, showing empathy, managing expectations, and explaining the need for the hostels (see 's-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2009a, p. 11). Neither were explanation and justification prevalent aspects of the meetings with the management boards, which concentrated on the implementation of the facilities. The explanation and justification of the location decision as such were not crucial elements in the board's attempts to generate support for the hostels.

Apart from the fact that the municipal executive did not elaborate on the considerations that motivated the location decision, particularly Eugster herself was further criticised for allegedly avoiding contact with neighbourhood residents in the months following the location decision. Eugster did decide not to participate in the meetings of the management boards because she wanted to hand over the implementation process to the municipal administration and wanted to avoid adding the political weight to the process that would have accompanied the presence of an alderman in public meetings. Neighbourhood residents, the media, and councillors from both the opposition and the coalition, however, interpreted this decision as a sign of unwillingness to explain, justify, and defend the location decision and to listen to neighbourhood residents' objections (Informants, 60, 61, 62, and 63, neighbourhood residents and councillors). In hindsight, Eugster recognised that it probably would have been better if she had been present at those meetings:

If I go there, then there would be no more implementing or discussing anything, for then I would just get attacked. (...) Later you think, if only I had gone there, every time. (...) Back then I thought: "That is not good. Then it is all about me. Then all neighbourhood residents will try and convince me that the facility should not be established." About that the squabbling is endless, even while there also has to be progress in the process in order to get a definite location.

(alderman Eugster)

In essence, alderman Eugster was thus criticised by both neighbourhood residents and councillors for being too reluctant to explain and justify the location decision to them in the period that followed the making of the location decision. This criticism was particularly strong because of the fact that many believed that the locations that were chosen were bad locations for the hostels, or that better locations were available (Informants 27, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 71, 72, 73, and 74). The fiercest protesters of course were critical of the locations, full stop, and were not so much interested in the board's considerations. Similarly, some councillors were only interested in getting the location decisions off the table. Yet, it seems that a pivotal group of neighbourhood residents and the majority of the council had objections to the locations but were open to argument, or at least showed a genuine interest in the board's considerations. "It is about the arguments, the viewpoints [and not the decision as such], but the debate did not concern those. We had to get rid of being labelled as NIMBYs (...) It should be all about the comparative assessment of locations" (Informant 74, also 72, neighbourhood residents).

It seems that when executives rendered account, they were rather reluctant to provide an elaborate account of their considerations. On several occasions accountees indicated that they were unable to form an accurate judgement on the location decisions made by the board because they lacked insight into its considerations (see Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2008b, 2009d). On the whole, the accounts provided by the executive were less extensive than accountees would have liked them to be.

Councillors, too, expressed a need for explanation and justification, which in their opinion was not always met. Consequently, early on in the process councillors were unable to perform the role of scrutiniser to the extent that they would have liked. Furthermore, councillors also believed that citizens should have been rendered account to more by the board (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009f, p. 19).

To summarise, local executives mainly rendered account to the Municipal Council and neighbourhood residents. However, explanation and justification were not dominant aspects of their communication strategy; they did not provide a thorough underpinning of the considerations that motivated the location decisions.

III: For what did local political-executive leaders render account?

The above sections already indicated that between February 2008 and March 2010 the 's-Hertogenbosch local executives rendered account of the hostel policy as such on several occasions. By contrast, the rendering of account for the actual location decision itself was less common.

There were, however, notable exceptions. The first was provided by the 26 February 2008 council meeting, in which alderman Eugster rendered account for the decision to locate a hostel in Churchillaan, notwithstanding the fact that this particular location did not meet all criteria that had been established in advance. In the debate, Eugster elaborately explained why the board believed it to be justifiable to deviate from some of the selection criteria. In round 2, the November 2009 reaction to the proposal to change the hostel policy provided a second exception. One of the aims thereof was to explain and justify the consideration to locate hostels on residential estates.

In addition, the board explained why it held on to the decision to opt for relatively large hostels (at the same time it decided to lower the minimum number of inhabitants for one hostel that had already been announced). On several occasions, the board also rendered account for the decision-making process (e.g., 's-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2009b). The board tried to justify the decision to not extensively involve citizens in the location decisions.

Overall, the municipal boards mainly rendered account for the hostel policy as such. To the extent that the board rendered account for the location decisions, it mainly rendered account for the siting of the facilities, whereas accountees requested explanations and justifications for the selection of locations. In particular, both councillors and neighbourhood residents would have liked the board to go deeper into the considerations that motivated the location decisions (e.g., Informants 62, 71, and 72).

IV: With what arguments did local political-executive leaders render account?

In the rendering of account for the hostels, the board repeatedly emphasised local government's duty to provide adequate care for homeless addicts (e.g., 's-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2008). The decisions to locate hostels in particular locations were often justified by referring to this obligation, which is best qualified as societal argumentation. For the decision to locate the facilities in residential estates, which over time became one of the main controversies in the hostels dossier, the societal argument was used that it would be best for the hostels clientele (e.g., 's-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2009b).

To the extent the executives rendered account for the location decisions as such, they mainly indicated that there would have been virtually no locations that met all criteria, especially not in the short term, which can be considered a situational argumentation (e.g., Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2008a).

Rendering account for the procedural aspect, the board voiced several arguments, the most important of which was the conviction that citizens' involvement would generate social opposition to all available locations, which would inhibit the realisation of a hostel at any location (e.g., 's-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2009b). The board believed it had the responsibility to decide in favour of the 'common good', as opposed to individual interests and the board appealed to the mechanisms of representative democracy and procedural agreements between the board and the council on several occasions (e.g., Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009h; 's-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2009a).

What attracts attention, looking at the argumentation the board used when it did render account, is the fact that the board often refers to its own beliefs and considerations. Many of the phrases that the board uses to explain and justify the hostel policy in general, or the separate location decisions start with: "The board believes that..." (e.g., Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009a, 2009h). The location decision was portrayed as a conflict of interests that had to be settled by the board (e.g., Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2008a). It is very difficult to determine what is cause and what is effect, but either way the end result was a highly politicised debate.

For example, the question whether it would be best for the hostels clients to be living on residential estates or not, became highly politicised. Not only was the empirical adequacy of the claim questioned by neighbourhood residents, but so was the board's decision to attribute considerable weight to this argument in their considerations. Similarly, the weight given to the advice of care agencies in the final decision was disputed by both councillors and residents. Also, the stringency of the existing financial agreements was questioned several times.

In the end, the board failed to produce an account of the considerations that motivated the location decisions that meshed with accountees' values and belief systems. As a consequence, the debate politicised further and further.

Without a doubt, the council played an important role in the politicising of the debate by questioning its own policy framework after being confronted with social opposition. The question remains what had happened if the council had stood firm, as alderman Eugster advocated till the last moment (see Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009f, p. 19; see also Stadsredactie Brabants Dagblad, 2010).

V: How did local political-executive leaders render account?

Between February 2008 and March 2010 the 's-Hertogenbosch local executives mainly rendered account in formal meetings with different accountees, notably the council. The rendering of account through written documents was less common, with the reaction to the proposal to change the hostel policy as the main exception.

In the accountability relationship with the council, Eugster's accountability strategy mostly rested on formal council meetings. The 1 July informal meeting between Eugster and the council committee on social developments forms a partial exception. Later on in the process especially, Eugster did not utilise informal communication channels for the rendering of account to councillors. "On July 1st, we had that meeting with the council. The rendering of account has all really happened during those formal moments: committee and council meetings. (...) So it did effectively go through the formal chains, the normal dualistic system" (Informant 27, senior administrator).

Councillors even claim that by the late autumn of 2009, Eugster had lost contact with the Municipal Council (Informants 62 & 64), which meant that the two no longer really communicated.

Alderman Eugster, earlier on in the second round especially, did invest considerably in her relationship with the governing coalition and regularly joined the 'coalition meeting' [*coalitieoverleg*], in which the political parties participate that take part in the coalition. Eugster's main goal was to "keep the coalition aligned" (Informant 27, senior administrator). This, however, turned out to be a very difficult task. As early as the 1 July 2009 meeting, a day after the location decision, councillors showed hesitations. The fact that the opposition from neighbourhood residents was stronger than expected in the following weeks, was not helpful in this respect. Between July 2009 and December 2009, Eugster met with members from the opposition several times, in particular those who had developed the counterproposal, as well as with the coalition partners. The nature of these meetings, however, was not that of the rendering of account, but rather that of negotiation. Furthermore, the eventual importance of these meetings was limited (Informant 27).

The same goes of initiatives that were employed by members of the municipal administration in an attempt to inform councillors about different aspects of the location decisions, such as the nature of the hostels' clientele. To the extent they were successful, these remained of limited relevance. Local bureaucrats could inform councillors about different aspects of the hostel policy and of the location decision, but they could not explain and justify them in the sense of rendering account because that would be an act that was essentially political. As regards matters that were of such political nature, in 's-Hertogenbosch direct contact between local bureaucrats and councillors was considered to be a *faux pas*. Although each Dutch municipality can draw up its own guidelines for how contacts between councillors and local bureaucrats are to be dealt with, contact that is political in nature rather than informative should generally be avoided, especially since the 2002 dualisation (see Vernieuwingsimpuls Dualisme en lokale democratie, 2005; Enthoven, 2011, pp. 397-405). The rendering of account by 's-Hertogenbosch was therefore the sole responsibility of the executives (as was the case in Ghent, see Chapter 10).

Overall, the rendering of account by the executive to the Municipal Council thus largely remained limited to formal settings. The direct, informal rendering of account to neighbourhood residents was also rare, especially in the weeks following the location decision. Although public meetings were held, the explanation and justification of the location decision were not prime elements in the communication.

VI: When did local political-executive leaders render account?

It has already been indicated that in the days and months following the 1 July 2009 location decision, the political-executives did not extensively render account for their decision. This also shows from the 14 July 2009 council meeting in which the hostels were discussed, even though it was not on the agenda originally. In this meeting, which took place two weeks after the location decision was made, councillors suggested that they did not yet have a clear picture of the board's considerations that motivated the location decision. Consider: "We have not seen the board's considerations yet. We would first like to come to know how the board reached its decision" (councillor, in Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009d, p. 10).

Similar complaints had been made by councillors about the rendering of account for the Churchilllaan decision of 2008. Consider: "[The board] should provide a more profound explanation, to the council as well as to residents. Why did they choose for a particular criterion? Why did they make this [location] decision? Based on that, we can determine whether we agree with this particular choice" (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2008a).

Throughout the course of the hostels dossier, councillors expressed a demand for more elaborate substantive justification of the location decisions. As late as 18 September 2009 three political groups from the council, in their proposal to make considerable changes to the hostel policy, claimed that the board had not yet made clear why it believed that hostels should be located on residential estates (LHR, RB & SK, 2009, p. 5).

The first thorough underpinning of some of the main considerations that motivated the location decisions was provided by the board on 10 November 2009 in reaction to the proposal, as well as in the accompanying press release, which dates 11 November 2009 (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009a; 's-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2009b). By that time, however, the council's attitude towards the hostel policy had already shifted substantially; it was already considering to fundamentally change the location decision-making process (see, e.g., Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009c). In the weeks following the 10 November council meeting, the council decided to do so and to request the board to redo the location decision-making process. This resulted in a council motion to that effect in the 15 December council meeting (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009e). The municipal executives, thus, made an effort to explain and justify their location decisions too late.

In addition, most accountability activities undertaken by 's-Hertogenbosch political-executives were of a reactive nature. Explanations and justifications of the location decisions were in many cases provided in response to evaluative questions from citizens, councillors or media. The 26 February 2008 council meeting provides a good example since it has a clear question-and-answer logic to it. The municipal executives rendered account in response to explicitly being called to account.

It seems that executives have stuck to this logic throughout the hostels dossier, mainly rendering account when they were called to account, that is, reactively. Although the different public meetings with residents generally started off with an executive informing neighbourhood residents, for example, the rendering of account generally begun only after citizens had asked the executive to explain the decision. Whereas executives showed *verantwoordingsbereidheid* in response, they were not inclined to proactively render account, that is, to render account in anticipation of evaluative questions by accountees. This is also evident in the various documents and press releases in which the locations were revealed. These rarely contained proactive justifications of the location decisions. In fact, explaining and justifying the location decisions were not core elements of the communication strategy (see 's-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2009a). This means that accountees had to actively call the executive to account so as to get an insight into the board's considerations. Consider:

Alderman Eugster: "With regard to the communication: the council has the opportunity to ask for information throughout the process; the board will always provide it, if requested. The board will keep a watchful eye and will inform you [the council] at its own initiative when it believes that it is necessary."

(Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009d, p. 18)

The experiences of the executives match the experiences of councillors. In an interview, Eugster indicated that she would have liked the Municipal Council to put the hostel issue on the agenda more often in the form of a questioning in the period between June 2009 and December 2009, since that would have provided her an opportunity to explain and justify the hostel policy. The skewed relations between Eugster and the council, however, meant that such possibilities were limited. In turn, this meant that accountees in their opinion lacked insight into the considerations that motivated the location decisions, while they believed that this was essential in order for them to be able to pass judgement on the location decisions.

Furthermore, it seems that when executives rendered account, they were rather reluctant to provide an elaborate account of their considerations. On several occasions accountees indicated that they were unable to form an accurate judgement on the lo-

cation decisions made by the board because they lacked insight into its considerations (e.g., Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2008b, 2009d). On the whole, the accounts provided by the executive were less extensive than accountees would have liked them to be. Councillors expressed a need for explanation and justification, which in their opinion was not always met. Consequently, early on in the process councillors were unable to perform the role of scrutiniser to the extent that they would have liked. Furthermore, councillors also believed that citizens should have been rendered account to more by the board (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009f, p. 19).

Overall, the accountability strategy of the board was reactive in nature. The board on very few occasions explained and justified the location decision on its own initiative. The board also seems to have been rather reluctant to provide an elaborate account of its considerations.

7.5 Analysis and conclusions

Between February 2008 and March 2010 local political-executive leaders in 's-Hertogenbosch, Eugster in particular, faced a serious challenge to their authority over two failed attempts to establish hostels for homeless addicts with a mental illness, in both the political and the social sense. The 's-Hertogenbosch board of executives was unable to convince both the Municipal Council and inhabitants of the reasonableness of the decisions to locate hostels in Churchillaan, Geert Grootestraat, and in Henri Bayensstraat. This came at the cost of the authority of alderman Eugster in particular. Several contextual factors have contributed to this, such the volatility of the council's attitude towards the hostels in the light of the upcoming elections, the lack of commitment among senior local bureaucrats, and the limited financial means. The unanimous 27 January 2009 agreement on the policy framework did not stop the council from rejecting the location decisions that the decision-making process produced.

Other factors can be attributed more directly to the actors that are the focus of the current research, that is, the executives involved. Many of these factors can be labelled 'poor communication'. This chapter has specifically reviewed the hostel case from the perspective of accountability in order to establish whether and how the executives' accountability strategies have added to the loss of authority. The current section discusses the findings.

The executives stood accountable for the location decisions, but at the same time portrayed only a limited willingness to actively render account for them, to councillors and neighbourhood residents. By and large, executives seem to have put less effort into the explanation and justification of the location decisions than the different accountees would have liked them to. Furthermore, the responsible alderman kept too great

a distance from neighbourhood residents who wanted to call her to account. Although the board's members showed *verantwoordingsbereidheid* on some occasions, they were not inclined to render account extensively or proactively, whereas they were expected to do so by councillors as well as inhabitants. This meant that the latter had too little insight into the board's considerations to be able to pass judgement on the location decisions, which led them to further question the authority of the board. Since accountees were unable to fully review the considerations that motivated the location decisions, they were more likely to question those, especially in the face of fierce social opposition and an impersistent council. The fact that the executives did not recognise the importance of explaining and justifying the location decisions, contributed to their loss of authority because of the value citizens and councillors placed on being able to understand the decision, even when they did not agree with it.

To sum up, both councillors and a substantial group of neighbourhood residents considered the locations that had been chosen to be bad locations and disputed the reasonableness of the location decision. The reactive, formal, and rather reserved accountability strategy that Eugster employed added additional pressure to her already declining authority. The accountees expected the alderman to proactively explain and justify the location decisions they opposed so strongly. Yet, Eugster provided little insight into the considerations that motivated the location decisions. The fact that the formal relationship with the Municipal Council was the prime mechanism through which the rendering of account took place, rather than informal mechanisms or the direct accountability relationship with neighbourhood residents, meant that there were little opportunities for Eugster to explain and justify the location decision in an attempt to create understanding. Among many other facts, this seems to have harmed the relationship between Eugster and neighbourhood residents and councillors. Eugster showed the necessary decisiveness by choosing and holding on to 'her' location decisions, yet her attitude was too directive, in the sense that she did only limitedly explain and justify the considerations that motivated the location decisions to both the council and neighbourhood residents. To the extent that she did do so, she was criticised for doing so too late and for not fully committing to her (accountability) relationship with neighbourhood residents.

Analysing Eugster's accountability strategy, it seems that when the municipal executive board encountered fierce social opposition from neighbourhood residents as well as hesitation in the Municipal Council, it lacked a clear account of why it had chosen for these particular locations. At the very least, it was unable to convince many accountees that it had thoroughly weighed all pros and cons. The account provided was primarily constructed on the basis of the criticism that accountees expressed because the rendering of account as such was not a core element in the communication strategy, which meant that the standoffish attitude Eugster took with regard to the

location decision was accompanied by a rather reactive and defensive accountability strategy. Neighbourhood residents in particular perceived this as an unwillingness to explain and justify location decisions that were so rigidly enforced (Informant 72). This led neighbourhood residents to question the reasonableness of the location decisions even further, and in their perception forced them to take an even more extreme point of view. “We were forced to take up an extreme position. Only then did we get a response”, said one Informant (72, neighbourhood resident). This contributed to the further politicisation of the hostels dossier that eventually led to the failure to enforce the location decisions and Eugster’s further loss of authority.

Table 17. Findings for 's-Hertogenbosch (rounds 1 & 2)

Relevant case characteristics	Sub-categories	Findings
<i>Initial challenge to authority</i>	<i>Political</i>	Strong challenge
	<i>Social</i>	Strong – very strong challenge
<i>Characteristics of the accountability strategy</i>	<i>Who?</i>	Diffuse political accountability
	<i>To whom?</i>	Social and political orientation, but insufficient rendering of account
	<i>For what?</i>	Siting
	<i>With what arguments?</i>	Societal argumentation
	<i>How?</i>	Indirect and formal
	<i>When?</i>	Reactive
<i>Rise to the challenge to authority</i>	<i>Political</i>	Significant decline
	<i>Social</i>	Significant decline
<i>Relevance of the rendering of account</i>		Substantial - high

8

's-Hertogenbosch (round 3): Rising from the ashes

You try to look for some kind of footing to fall back on when you are required to render account.

(alderman Weterings)

On 3 March 2010 municipal elections took place in the Netherlands. For the city of 's-Hertogenbosch the results meant that the 2006-2010 coalition government, in which PvdA, VVD, CDA, and GroenLinks participated, lost its majority in the Municipal Council. One of the main losing parties was the PvdA. Having received 18.6 per cent of the votes in 2006, the PvdA received only 11.5 per cent of the votes in 2010 (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010i). Consequently, they lost three of their eight seats in the Municipal Council. Nevertheless, the PvdA managed to preserve their executive power by joining a newly formed coalition of VVD, PvdA, GroenLinks, CDA, and Rosmalens Belang, at the price of one of their two positions in the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. Only alderman Rodney Weterings stayed on.

When the new coalition reaffirmed the ambition to establish the hostels ('s-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2010e, p. 10), Weterings, at his own request, took over the hostels dossier from CDA alderman Eugster, thereby accepting the responsibility to establish the highly controversial hostels. He recognised the risks of the dossier. Yet, he was eager to accept the responsibility, as he was convinced that the hostels had to be realised and that the credibility and authority of the 's-Hertogenbosch government needed to be restored, which he believed had suffered greatly under the twofold failure to realise the hostels. Weterings became 'project alderman' for the hostels when he was installed on 27 April 2010, more than two years after the fire on the Churchilllaan location.

By the end of 2011, at the time the final interviews for this case study were being conducted, two new locations for the hostels had been selected: one in Van Broeckhovenlaan and one in Zuiderparkweg. While success in this third round of the hostels dossier was far from self-evident, as was clear from further social opposition in the aftermath of the 22 October 2010 location decision, failure seemed to have been avoided. Although the two hostels had not yet been realised, there were very few reasons, at least not socio-political ones, to believe that the hostels would not be realised this time. The social opposition had slowly died down and this time round the majority of the Municipal Council backed up the board's location decision. And, what is more relevant for the current study, the authority of alderman Weterings had remained intact, not to

say improved. The same goes for the authority of the municipal executive as a whole. The current chapter first provides a case study report for the period between March 2010 and October 2011 and then analyses what effect the rendering of account had on the authority of the executives involved.

8.1 'Round 3': a different approach

Round 2, as described in the previous chapter, ended with the unanimous acceptance on 15 December of a motion by the 's-Hertogenbosch Municipal Council requiring the board to redo the location decision-making process for the two hostels that had already been decided upon. An important aim of the motion was to provide local citizens with greater opportunities to participate in the location decision-making process than in the previous two rounds. The motion explicitly requested that citizens be provided the opportunity to present alternative locations and also requested the board consult neighbourhood residents on the locations under consideration. The motion set 15 March 2010²⁰ as the last day for citizens to propose alternative locations for the hostels (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009e, p. 30). The postponement of the location decisions until after the 3 March municipal elections was one of the implicit goals of the motion, according to Informants (e.g., 62 & 64, councillors).

As the motion had demanded, citizens' involvement in the decision-making process became one of the main characteristics of the decision-making process under alderman Weterings. First, Weterings consulted several spokesmen of protest movements, of care agencies, and of other actors involved to discuss the outline of the decision-making process ('s-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2010b). In July 2010 this resulted in a Strategy Plan in which the municipal board outlined the decision-making process (see 's-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2010c). The trajectory consisted of seven phases during which advice was given on the available locations that were subsequently evaluated by several bodies representing the variety of actors involved. This led up to a final decision before the 1 November 2010²¹ deadline and an eighth phase of communication and implementation thereafter.

The location decisions concerned two search areas, called South and East, respectively, which were the same areas as those in round 2 (see Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2009g).

Although the whole decision-making process took place within a very short period of time (May 2010 – November 2010) it was a complex one. The municipal board received an advice from a steering committee, which consisted of representatives from practically all actors involved, including neighbourhood residents. This steering committee based its advice on the recommendations by an advisory board consisting of project

Table 18. Overview of the location decision-making process 's-Hertogenbosch (round 3)

Phase	Brief summary	Time period	Locations
1. Getting acquainted	Alderman Weterings met with neighbourhood residents and other actors involved and collected their advice on process design	May/June 2010	-
2. Preparation	Setting up the process management and designing the process	June 2010	-
3. Search & recruitment	Search for alternative locations and the recruitment of citizen participants	June 2010	123
4. Technical examination	Technical examination of the availability and suitability of possible locations	July- September 2010	38
5. Obtaining advice	Two advisory boards consisting of neighbourhood residents and an advisory board consisting of professional partners gave advice to a Steering Committee, who in turn advised the municipal board; also political debate	August – 12 October 2010	4
6. Sounding board phase	The municipal board collected neighbourhood residents' advice on the four locations included in the Steering Committee's advice	13-20 October 2010	-
7. Decision-making	The municipal board made the final location decisions	22 October 2010	2
8. Rendering of account and implementation	Local executives explained and justified their location decisions and the management boards were set up	October/ November 2010	-

(Based on 's-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2010c; Van den Berg *et al.*, 2011, and the case study)

partners and two citizen advisory boards consisting of seven neighbourhood residents each. Both the citizen advisory boards and the steering committee judged the suitability of locations and prioritised them from their respective perspectives. After the board had received the steering committee's provisional advice consisting of two preferred locations for each of the two hostels, the municipal executives collected feedback on those locations from neighbourhood residents in a number of public meetings. Then, the steering committee gave the board its final advice. Taking this advice into account, along with all other input the board received during the preceding process, the board made the final location decision. This was then communicated to the participants, to the Municipal Council, to neighbourhood residents, and to the media, after which the implementation process started.

Citizens were thus involved in the location decision-making process in the sense that a) they could provide alternative locations, b) a number of citizens, who were supposed to bring in the 'citizen perspective', participated in the advisory boards and the steering committee, and c) neighbourhood residents could give feedback to the board on the four locations the steering committee included in its provisional advice.

In their commissioned evaluation of the process Van den Berg, Flierman, and Hanemaayer (2011) rightly claim that it cannot be established beyond reasonable doubt whether citizens' involvement in the decision-making process made an actual

difference in terms of locations. Theoretically, other procedures could have resulted in the same locations. While this is true, given that the outcome need not have been different, it is nonetheless undeniable that the advisory boards' advice had a demonstrable effect on the steering committee's advice. The steering committee did not, for example, consider locations that the advisory board had labelled 'unsuitable'. At the same time it should be noted that citizens were not involved in the actual decision-making, which was the exclusive responsibility of the board. Citizens and others had an advisory role only since the municipal board made its own, autonomous decision. "These are all wonderful intentions, but if you look at what the actual influence of the population has really been. I do not know..." (politician).

In the run-up to the 22 October location decision, alderman Weterings repeatedly emphasised that although the board would take all input into account it would make an autonomous decision (e.g., Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010d, p. 7; 2010h; Weterings, 2010a). Citizens and the Municipal Council had no formal power over the location decisions. In that sense, the location decision can still be considered to be of a directive nature, especially since the board's final decision was not free from criticism, even from some of those involved in the location decision-making process.

As in the other cases included in this study, in interviews some citizens of 's-Hertogenbosch were rather ambiguous towards the decision. On the one hand they respected the order of the representative democracy and acknowledged that it was the executive's exclusive responsibility to decide on a location. But on the other, they did not draw the conclusion that this meant that the decision should be enforced: "[Our own resistance is] is also weird in a way; for the location has been decided upon democratically. That I do not have a problem with, but I do take issue with 'decision is decision'" (Informant 72, neighbourhood resident).

Consequently, public protest still thrived. But, contrary to the expectations of several neighbourhood residents (e.g., Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010b, p. 5) and a number of councillors (e.g., Informant 62), alderman Weterings stood firm when the locations were sharply criticised: the locations had been decided upon by the board and, therefore, would not be reconsidered, despite what the criticism implied.

Naturally public protest against the location decisions peaked just after their announcement on 22 October 2010. Yet, in the run-up to the decision, public protest had already built up. Especially the sixth phase of the location decision-making process, which took place mid October, provided an occasion for neighbourhood residents to voice their dissatisfaction. During this phase, the municipal board collected feedback from citizens on the four locations that the steering committee had proposed in its provisional advice. Protest movements that had formed in both South and East organised public protests (see Van Gorkum, 2010; "Fakkeloptocht tegen hostel", 2010), collected signatures ("Weterings krijgt zwartboek over hostel in Zuid", 2010), contacted

the administration and councillors, and sent letters to the editors of local newspapers, particularly *Brabants Dagblad*.

On 12 October 2010 approximately 70 plus neighbourhood residents (personal observation) attended a Municipal Council meeting in which all but one of the seven political party groups from the opposition requested the board to collect feedback not only on the four locations that the steering committee had included in its advice, but also on other locations. The board did not grant the request. In the public gallery that overlooked the meeting the atmosphere was one of incomprehension and disbelief. Alderman Weterings especially was the subject of personal reproach of all sorts, his attitude being described by neighbourhood residents as “uninterested” “self-centred”, and “arrogant” (personal observation).

A similar atmosphere characterised the meetings that the municipal administration had organised during the next few days, in which the board collected feedback on the four locations that the steering committee had included in its provisional advice. Some of these meetings were boycotted by neighbourhood residents (Van Lith, 2010d), which resulted in the presence of a mere one or two citizens. Other meetings were attended by several dozens of neighbourhood residents. In total roughly 100 neighbourhood residents attended the meetings, whereas 175 neighbourhood residents reported to the municipal administration that they would not attend the meetings in protest of the hostels being established on residential estates (Van den Berg *et al.*, 2011, p. 45). In interviews, representatives from the municipal administration and from the municipal executive as well as neighbourhood residents described these meetings as “unpleasant encounters”, “difficult evenings”, and “tumultuous meetings” (Informants 1, 44, 60, and 61, see also Van Lith, 2010b). Similar wording was used by those involved to describe the public meetings that followed the 22 October location decision in early November, in which members from the board explained and justified the location decisions (see Brink, 2010; Van Lith, 2010c). Public opposition against the hostels remained.

Yet, in the weeks following the location decision, the level of public protest slowly but surely decreased. During this period, members of the municipal board, in particular alderman Weterings and mayor Rombouts, had regular contact with spokesmen of the protest movements and other neighbourhood residents. Several public meetings were organised and the executives visited neighbourhoods numerous times to discuss the implementation of the hostels as well as possible measures against the detrimental effects neighbourhood residents feared. Subsequently, the social opposition diminished. Over the course of time, many neighbourhood residents came to accept the fact that the hostels would be realised on the locations that had been chosen.

8.2 Overcoming opposition

The relative success of Weterings' approach in overcoming the social and political opposition can be explained by a number of factors. Together, these factors formed a window of opportunity, a policy window (Kingdon, 1995) through which to realise the hostels that Weterings utilised to its full potential. Four factors were of particular importance.

First, round 3 of the location decision-making process started immediately after the 3 March 2010 municipal elections. This meant that the new municipal board could, to some extent, start with a blank sheet and that it did not have to worry too much about upcoming elections. Having discussed the hostels dossier explicitly in the formation of the new coalition, the ranks were now much more firmly closed in the new Municipal Council than they were in the previous council with regard to the hostels. Although the relationships within the council and between the council and the board still required continuous maintenance in round 3, too, Weterings' starting position was more favourable than Eugster's in this respect. By 2010 the coalition was committed to closing the issue of the hostels.

This factor was reinforced by a second factor, namely, that Weterings could not only rely on the unanimously agreed upon 27 January 2009 policy framework, which *de facto* lacked the full support of the council, but also on the unanimously agreed upon 15 December 2010 council motion. The motion provided Weterings a clear outline for the location decision-making process to which the full council had committed itself, which enabled the alderman to take up the position that he was 'simply' executing the council's motion. For neighbourhood residents it was crucial that they were extensively involved in the preparatory phases of the decision-making process in the new approach.

Also important here was the fact that the twofold failure to realise the hostels had functioned as a wake-up call for the municipal administration. Local bureaucrats realised that something had to be done about the precarious situation in which the 's-Hertogenbosch government found itself. This broke internal resistance to a large extent. Moreover, under the leadership of Weterings a considerable amount of manpower was made available for the hostels dossier. This was an important third factor, which was of particular importance because the location decision had to be made in a relatively short time period. AWBZ regulations required a location decision before 1 November 2010, which meant that quite a lot of work had to be done, especially since the procedure was so complex.

The fourth factor that was of crucial importance relates less to the context in which Weterings operated than to the approach he himself adopted. Whereas Eugster sometimes cut off her nose to spite her face in the sense that her personal involvement in

the dossier reduced her sensitivity for the socio-political context in which she operated, Weterings was fully aware of this context and showed great sensitivity for it. Within this context, Weterings took an approach that in Herbert Simon's (1957) terms could be fittingly labelled as 'satisficing behaviour'. Especially in his relationship with the Municipal Council, Weterings took a pragmatic approach in which getting things done was the main motto, while minimising risk and effort. His accountability strategy, which is analysed in Section 8.4, is a good example: minimising political risk was one of the main aims thereof. First, Section 8.3 looks into the extent to which his authority was challenged and regained.

8.3 Challenge to authority

By the time of the final interviews for this case study by the end of 2011, several neighbourhood residents had simply resigned themselves to the fact that the decision was now irreversible, and had therefore given up the fight. Yet, many others willingly accepted the location decision because they believed that the current locations were reasonable. One Informant, who for a long time was one of the leading men in the social opposition, acknowledged that whereas he would have preferred another location for one of the hostels, the current one was "fine" (Informant 72; see below).

What was illustrative for neighbourhood residents' attitudes towards the location was the fact that in the meetings of the 2011 management boards the locations as such met with qualified approval from the well-disposed neighbourhood residents that took part, whereas this had not at all been the case in the 2009 management boards, which were characterised by a continuous struggle over the location decision. "It is by far means no longer as political as it was in the last management board. (...) At that point [general acquiescence, or acceptance of the location decisions, NK] we then never arrived" (Neighbourhood resident, management board meeting 07-09-2011).

Still, several individual neighbourhood residents have remained fierce protesters, many of which were not in contact with the municipal administration outside formal objections and appeals. But, on the whole the challenge to authority diminished to manageable proportions. In interviews, the executives describe how the residents' attitude changed from 'active resistance' to one of "acquiescence and cooperation" (e.g., alderman Weterings) over the course of time. In interviews neighbourhood residents describe a similar development in their attitudes towards the hostel locations, which they describe in terms such as "agreeable" and "acceptable" (Informants 73 & 74).

Some may consider this to be the 'normal trajectory' along which social opposition against human service facilities develops. Yet, this result was not self-evident given the history of the hostels dossier in 's-Hertogenbosch. Twice before, the sustained presence

of strong social resistance in 's-Hertogenbosch had resulted in the cancellation of what was proclaimed to be an irreversible decision. By the time of the start of round 3, the hostels dossier was burdened with this history, which made it ever more treacherous territory. Informants from the municipal administration, the executive board as well as from the Municipal Council acknowledged that social opposition in round 3 could easily have severely derailed the establishment of the hostels and could have seriously damaged the position of the 's-Hertogenbosch government.

One of the main factors that contributed to the relative success in round 3 in terms of 'getting things done', was that, in contrast to round 2, the Municipal Council, or rather the governing coalition, this time stood its ground. When the social opposition in South and East started to build up as the number of possible locations for the hostels decreased, the Municipal Council stuck to the decision-making process as it was agreed upon. The governing coalition was not willing to intervene in the decision-making process, contrary to the request of most of the political party groups from the opposition, for example, by including additional locations in the feedback phase of the decision-making process (see, e.g., Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010d). Consequently, the majority of the Municipal Council stood firm, which severely reduced opponents' opportunities to prevent the hostels from being established on the locations that the municipal board had chosen. Once more the strength of the coalition became apparent when the council decided to make available additional financial means for the establishment of the hostel on the Zuiderparkweg at a value of 800.000 Euros (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010e, 2010g). For alderman Weterings keeping the governing majority intact was crucial:

My goal is of course to finally realise the hostels with as much deliberation and support from the neighbourhood as possible. But my first goal is naturally to guide these hostels through the council; to keep half plus one. And if the neighbourhood says: "Yes, we do have faith in it", then that is all the better.

Three factors seem to explain the perseverance of the governing coalition. First, its members were firmly committed to the establishment of the hostels. The fact that the establishment of the hostels was part of the coalition agreement between VVD, PvdA, GroenLinks, CDA, and Rosmalens Belang provided additional backing that Eugster lacked in round 2. Contrary to the 's-Hertogenbosch (rounds 1 & 2) case, the majority of the Municipal Council solidly supported the establishment of the hostels this time round. Second, many councillors by now wished that the tedious hostels dossier would be over and done with after more than two years of "treading on eggs" (Informants, 62, 63 and 64, also neighbourhood residents 71, 72, and 74). They wanted to avoid further socio-political conflict. Third, most political party groups, even those from the opposi-

tion, believed that this time the municipal board had made a serious effort to involve citizens in the decision-making process as requested, and on the whole had carefully completed the location decision-making process that was agreed upon (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010g, 2010e). According to Informants from the council, the fact that round 3 did not take place in the shadow of municipal elections since these were still almost four years away, undoubtedly contributed to the councils' willingness to stand firm. This postulate is confirmed by the analysis of round 2 in the previous chapter and by the experts on location decision-making processes that were interviewed for the current study (Informants 47 & 65): elections form a severe threat to the political support from the council that is crucial for municipal executives in order to make controversial decisions like these.

Throughout round 3 of the hostel process alderman Weterings and the municipal board as a whole managed to maintain the support from the council. The fact that Weterings was willing to take on the responsibility to realise the controversial hostels earned him much appreciation from many of the actors involved. Moreover, many believed that Weterings deserved recognition for the way in which he handled the location decision-making process. The fact that he 'managed to get things done' in such difficult circumstances was widely appreciated, even though many Informants added that Weterings, other than Eugster, benefitted from the fact that by April 2010 a more inclusive approach had already been outlined by the council (e.g., Informants 64 & 82, councillor and senior administrator). Even some of the fiercest protesters recognised the achievement. Without a doubt, this has contributed to Weterings' position as an alderman.

Still, Weterings' conduct was not entirely free from criticism. First, some alleged mistakes were made in the location decision-making process. As the alderman responsible for the hostels, Weterings, for example, chaired the public meetings in which the board collected feedback from neighbourhood residents, which put him in a double role. It meant that on the one hand he was the butt of citizens' dissatisfaction and had to defend the hostel policy, and on the other had to act as an independent chairman of the meetings. Some consider this to be a small design flaw in the process (e.g., Informants 62 & 71, councillor and neighbourhood resident; see also Van den Berg *et al.*, 2011, p. 26).

More generally, there was reproach about Weterings' attitude. Many suggested his style of communication was sometimes of a too authoritarian nature. Although from time to time it may be wise to act in a somewhat decisive manner that convincingly communicates the message that the location decision will not be the subject of discussion, many suggested that Weterings occasionally came across as being more 'arrogant' than was good for him. This approach made it, among other things, more difficult

for the alderman to come into contact with neighbourhood residents in a way that fostered fruitful cooperation.

In the experience of many of the actors involved, Weterings had a tendency to come across as being rather distant, especially in the communication with neighbourhood residents. On several occasions Weterings intentionally utilised this characteristic to his benefit, though. During the 12 October 2010 council meeting he deliberately adopted a rather disinterested attitude. He leaned back in his chair, played with his mobile phone and gave short and sharp answers to councillors' questions. His body language was one of uprightness. The aim was to communicate the message to councillors that he was currently executing the council's 15 December 2009 motion, which meant that the council was not in play at that moment: the board was in the middle of the decision-making process, in which it would make an autonomous decision. In addition, Weterings wanted to get across the message that the coalition government was standing firm: this time, the board's location decision would be final. In relation to the Municipal Council it seems that this approach functioned as intended.

Yet, for the 70 plus neighbourhood residents that observed the council meeting from the public gallery, Weterings' attitude was perceived as arrogant (personal observation). To some extent this may have had a functional element as well, since Weterings did not want to leave the impression that there was room for negotiation with regard to the location decision. Yet, his distant attitude may have attributed to the strained relationship between Weterings and neighbourhood residents in the 'sounding board phase' that began the next day.

During the course of the hostels dossier, though, Weterings' position as an alderman improved. He quickly regained authority in relation to the hostels dossier. The locations in Geert Grootestraat and Henri Bayensstraat (the latter, especially), were generally regarded as unreasonable (see Chapter 7). Yet, Van Broeckhovenlaan and Zuiderparkweg were generally perceived as being reasonable locations. Clearly, not everyone agreed with these locations. The fact that both locations were situated on residential estates, for example, still led to strong disagreement with neighbourhood residents and also councillors, even though the criterion was included in the policy framework. Many neighbourhood residents as well as a considerable number of councillors preferred other locations, such as the Rijnstraat 4 location or Schubertsingel 32. Nonetheless, they perceived the location decisions as reasonable. When asked what they thought about the current locations, even some of the fiercest protesters answered in terms like these:

This location is not good, but better. As neighbourhood residents we put forward other locations that satisfied the criteria that we had as municipality and neighbourhood even better. But, [Weterings] has struck a very good

balance between the interests of the city and the interests of us neighbourhood residents. This solution is one we can happily live with.

(Informant 71, neighbourhood resident)

The [Zuiderparkweg] location is not the best available one, but it is fine.

(Informant 72, neighbourhood resident)

This view was backed up by councillors. Consider: "In the end my preference would have been the Rijkswaterstaat building. (...) But, this location is defensible" (Informant 62, councillor).

Across the Municipal Council, or at least the large majority of it, it was held that the locations that had been chosen this time were "good", "reasonable", or "defensible". Many citizens portrayed similar views. With the exception of those neighbourhood residents that still strongly opposed the location decisions, it seems that most neighbourhood residents now considered the location decisions to be reasonable, too. Although few neighbourhood residents supported the location decisions, it seems that many of them understood why the municipal board opted for these locations.

Because I was spokesman for the whole neighbourhood I have played along for a while. That's how I see it actually. [We kept saying]: "We are very much against this", while at that time I knew all along: this is just a solution that is very acceptable to the majority of the neighbourhood.

(Informant 71, neighbourhood resident)

The next sections aim to establish to what extent and how the executives' accountability strategies have contributed to arriving at this stage.

8.4 's-Hertogenbosch' (round 3) local executives' accountability strategies

This section provides an overview of the accountability strategies developed by political-executive leaders in the 's-Hertogenbosch case after the 2010 municipal elections. To structure the analysis, the model of accountability from Chapter 3 is used, which consists of the six dimensions 'Who?', 'To whom?', 'For what?', 'With what arguments?', 'How?', and 'When?'.

I: Who rendered account?

By strongly identifying himself with and committing himself to the hostels dossier Weterings, both internally and externally, ensured that he was the undisputed 'face' of the hostels dossier. Consequently, in round 3 the hostels dossier benefitted from Weterings' individualised political leadership because it meant that the responsible alderman formed a clear contact for neighbourhood residents and other accountees (see also Van den Berg *et al.*, 2011). Even some of the fiercest protesters, neighbourhood residents as well as councillors, appreciated Weterings' personal willingness to take on the hostels dossier (Informants 60, 61, 62, 65, 71, and 72).

Also in the rendering of account for the location decision, which was formally a collective decision of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen (as Weterings emphasised in, e.g., Van Lith, 2010a), Weterings was at the forefront. In contacts with the council, neighbourhood residents, and the media, Weterings clearly acted as the spokesman for the board. In this, the alderman did receive crucial support from his project management. Other members of the board participated in the process as well. The then alderman Pauli, for example, chaired two of the public meetings in the sounding board phase. Likewise, on quite a few occasions mayor Rombouts accompanied Weterings to meetings with neighbourhood residents, especially after the location decisions were made. The mayor took on the role of *burgervader* by, among other things, paying house visits and carried out his formal responsibilities for public safety in relation to the hostels. Yet, Weterings remained the main representative of the board when it came to the controversial location decisions and the rendering of account for them. This was highly appreciated by citizens and others and proved effective in the rendering of account because for accountees it was overly clear whom to address (see also Van den Berg *et al.*, 2011, pp. 10-11).

Yet, when Weterings announced his resignation as an alderman in October 2011²², he was much less identified with the success of the hostels dossier than Eugster was associated with the failure to establish hostels in the first and second attempt. The hostels formed a substantial part of the appreciation Weterings received, but he was not equated with them.

To sum up, Weterings' individualised political leadership not only increased his accountability, it was also used by the alderman to position himself as a distinguishable accountor and to actively render account.

II: To whom did local political-executive leaders render account?

For Weterings, the municipal board was the main forum to which he rendered account in relation to the hostels dossier. Since in round 2 the board had proven to be a crucial actor in the decision-making process, Weterings heavily invested in his relationship with the board, especially the coalition members. In the hostels dossier he seems to

have perceived his relationship with the council primarily as a principal-agent relationship, time and time again emphasising that he was simply 'doing his job' by executing the 15 December 2009 motion and by stressing that the council would have to wait its turn. In line with the formal separation of powers between the council and the board, Weterings stressed that he had received a mandate from the Municipal Council to decide on where to locate the hostels as long as he respected the policy framework the council had agreed upon. This meant that it was the council's job to scrutinise him and hold him to account as an alderman at the end of the process. This was the main accountability relationship that applied in the hostels dossier (see Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010d). In fact, on several occasions Weterings and other members of the board referred citizens to this accountability relationship (e.g., Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010c). By doing so, the board upheld the formal chain of delegation, running from citizens to councillors and then to the municipal board.

This, however, did not mean that there was no direct accountability relationship between the board and neighbourhood residents. During the eighth phase of the decision-making process, that is, after the final decision was made, Weterings on several occasions explained and justified the board's decision to neighbourhood residents, and not only during the 2 and 3 November public meetings. The extent to which he actually rendered account for the location decision as such, however, was limited (see below).

In the run-up to the decision, Weterings also rendered account for his acts as an alderman in the location decision-making process. The main addressees thereof were those citizens that participated in the location decision-making process and members of the action committees that had been formed. Account was rendered to other citizens on a regular basis, mostly in procedural terms through public letters as well as the municipal website. Citizens were also rendered account to via the media, which also formed autonomous forums.

Many Informants stressed the role of the editorial board of the local newspaper *Brabants Dagblad* particularly as an influential accountee in the hostels dossier. The *Brabants Dagblad* was not afraid to pass judgement on the hostel decision-making process. Its influence on the public opinion *de facto* functioned as an informal sanctioning mechanism, which made them an accountee. Weterings recognised the importance of this relationship, maybe even more so than Eugster, and rendered account to *Brabants Dagblad* on numerous occasions in procedural terms (e.g., in Brink & Van Gorkum, 2010) as well as in substantive terms (e.g., in Van Lith, 2010a). Interestingly, the accountability relationship between the municipal board and the media ran both ways. When Weterings believed that *Brabants Dagblad's* news coverage was too biased, he did not hesitate to request the newspaper be more factual when it reported on the hostels.

Overall, Weterings rendered account to a wide variety of actors, mainly focusing on those actors that were involved in the decision-making process, the council, (participating) citizens, and local media.

III: For what did local political-executive leaders render account?

When the 's-Hertogenbosch board informed the Municipal Council of its location decisions on 2 November 2010, the explanation of its considerations was limited to a single sentence:

On the basis of the final advice of the steering group and all the documents behind it, we decided, on 22nd of October 2010, to designate the following locations in the South and East neighbourhoods for the establishment of a hostel: South: Zuiderparkweg 282/284; East: Van Broeckhovenlaan unnumbered (previously nr. 2, primary school De Plataan).

(’s-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2010d)

Whereas the letter to the council contained an elaborate description of the process the board had gone through, the board’s considerations received little attention. Furthermore, the sentence that was included provided little insight into the actual considerations since it merely indicated that the decision was based on the steering committee’s final advice and all other available documents.

One might be inclined to believe that the former fact provided implicit insight into a substantial part of the boards considerations, since the steering committee’s advice forms the residue of a selection process that consisted of only 4 locations, compared to the 123 unique locations the process started out with, based on the input of a wide range of actors. Yet, time and time again alderman Weterings had indicated that the municipal board would make an autonomous and integral comparative assessment of *all* available locations at the end of the location decision-making process (e.g., Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010d, p. 7). The advice may provide support for the board’s considerations; it does not in itself give insight into them. Although the board eventually chose two of the four locations the steering committee had included in its advice, it could have chosen completely different ones. In retrospect, the board declared that it had followed a step-by-step selection model [*trechtermodel*], but up to the actual location decision the board repeatedly held that all options were still open (see Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010d; Van den Berg *et al.*, 2011; 's-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2011).

The 2 November 2010 letter to the council was representative of the extent to which the municipal board rendered account for its location decisions in terms of explaining and justifying its considerations. The board rendered account not for the selection

of the locations, but exclusively for the siting of the facilities on these locations: it explained to neighbourhood residents, to the council, and to the media why it believed that the locations it had chosen were suited for the establishment of the hostels. Consider:

[East] For this location the board has chosen because the building is relatively isolated from houses in the direct surroundings. Between the location and the nearest houses lies a thoroughfare. In addition, at this location one can build something new, which gives the possibility to take the wishes of the neighbourhood into consideration.

[South] The choice for this location has been made because of its position in a separate street, with behind it a thoroughfare and a large green strip. The building is relatively isolated from houses. In addition, at this location one can build something new, which gives the possibility to take the wishes of the neighbourhood into consideration.

(Weterings, 2010b; Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010a)

The board, thus, justified the act of establishing hostels at these particular locations. Yet, it did not explain or justify the selection of locations as such because it did not provide a comparative assessment of the available locations (see also Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2012, pp. 17-18).

This is not to say that such a comparison was lacking from the decision-making process, or that the final locations lacked careful considerations. Rather, the board did not make its considerations explicit other than referring to reports of the process that preceded the actual decision-making. In themselves, these documents, however, did not provide an account of the considerations that motivated the location decision. This analysis was shared by Van den Berg, Flierman, and Hanemaayer, who stated that the board did not publicly motivate the location decision and did not provide an account of its considerations (Van den Berg *et al.*, 2011, pp. 10, 13). Looking closely at the information the board provided, though, the conclusion should have been a bit more subtle. The board, for example, did explain and justify the guiding principle to locate the hostels on residential estates on ideological grounds to a variety of accountees on several occasions (e.g., Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010h, p. 4; 2010k, p. 3; 2010c, p. 5). On the whole, however, in round 3 of the hostels dossier substantive explanation and justification of the location decisions were indeed rare. The board did not extensively render account for the location decisions to any of the accountees, contrary to the expectations it raised on several occasions. Consider: "Alderman Weterings: 'The decision has been made. This is not an evening for you to have a say, we are

here tonight to explain to you why we have chosen for this location” (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010b, p. 5; see also Van den Berg *et al.*, 2011, p. 13).

Such expectations, though, were not met. The board did not render account for the location decision extensively. Contrary to what *Brabants Dagblad* journalist Van der Lee (2010) seemed to suggest, it was, therefore, difficult for citizens to judge the quality of the board's decision-making: they were provided little information on why the location decisions were made as they were.

Evidently though, throughout the location decision-making process the municipal board provided a substantial amount of information to a variety of accountees: neighbourhood residents, councillors, the media, etc. Via the municipal website practically all documents that concerned the hostel process were made publicly available, ranging from the Strategy Plan and press releases to minutes of all public meetings as well as the meetings of the advisory boards and the steering committee. In addition to this, during the sounding board phase the municipal website included an interactive map of all locations that had been under consideration, which included the advice of the advisory boards and the steering committee. On top of this, on a regular basis the board issued press releases and sent letters to neighbourhood residents in which it reported on the current situation. However, since the board made an autonomous location decision for which all this provided input only, making this information available cannot be considered to be the rendering of account for the location decision since none of these sources explained the board's considerations. Hence, the board did not actually explain and justify why it chose Zuiderparkweg and Van Broeckhovenlaan.

Rather, the board elaborately rendered account for its conduct in procedural terms. Throughout the location decision-making process, alderman Weterings continually and extensively explained and justified his actions in reference to how the location decision had been reached. The board not only informed others about what it had done, but also explained why it had acted in the way it had. Roughly speaking, the rendering of account started with the June/July 2010 letters to the Municipal Council ('s-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2010a, 2010b) and continued until after the publication of the B&A evaluation of the hostel process in March 2011. The most concrete example, but not necessarily the most important one, of the rendering of account in procedural terms was the *procesverantwoording*, the procedural account the board sent to the Municipal Council on 2 November 2010, in which it provided an elaborate account of the actual location decision-making process ('s-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2010d).

Another example that carried some importance was the B&A Consultancy evaluation of the hostel process in combination with the board's reaction to it. When the board, predominantly on its own initiative, asked B&A to evaluate the process, it explicitly asked for an evaluation of the decision-making process as it was agreed upon by the

Municipal Council (see Van den Berg *et al.*, 2011, p. 6). It did not ask for a substantive evaluation of the location decisions it made. The nature of the evaluation gave clear direction to the rendering of account about the location decision-making process that followed its publication, which took place in the form of the board's reaction and in contacts with the press. It was the procedural rendering of account the board aimed for, not the substantive explanation and justification of its considerations. Strictly speaking, this means that B&A has not actually evaluated the location decision-making process, but rather its run-up since the actual, autonomous decision was made by the board in private.

Overall, the accountability strategy of Weterings had a clear focus. Rather than explaining and justifying the hostel policy or the location decision substantively, he rendered account almost exclusively for the procedural aspects of the location decision. He provided almost no insight into the considerations that motivated the location decision, but explained and justified what he had done.

IV: With what arguments did local political-executive leaders render account?

When rendering account for its conduct in procedural terms, the board used five main arguments. First, it often referred to the frameworks for the hostel process that had been agreed upon by the Municipal Council, that is, the 27 January 2009 council proposal, the 15 December 2009 motion, and the 15 July 2010 Strategy Plan. On a regular basis, especially in his contacts with the Municipal Council, but also during public meetings, alderman Weterings referred to the trajectory as it was arranged (e.g., Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010d, pp. 9-10). The agreed upon division of tasks between board and council in particular was often brought to the attention of the accountees. This is considered to be a situational argument. Second, on several occasions Weterings highlighted the importance of involving all relevant actors in the location decision-making process and taking their input seriously. For example, when several members from the opposition indicated that they would have liked the board to include the Rijnstraat 4 location in the sounding board phase, the alderman justified his decision for not doing so in these terms: "I would not take seriously the people who have played a role in this entire trajectory, if I did not give extra weight to the four locations that have been selected by the steering group" (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010d, p. 7). This is more of an ideological argument.

Third, alderman Weterings on several occasions referred to conditions that allegedly limited his room to manoeuvre. These are mainly situational arguments. Most important were the requirement from the *Univé-VGZ-IZA-Trias Zorgkantoor* to locate the hostels on residential estates and the 1 November 2010 deadline for the location decision on which the financing of the hostel depended. Note that the application of criteria like these was still essentially political.

A fourth category of arguments that the board employed was of a more pragmatic nature. When a neighbourhood resident, for example, challenged the underpinning of the selection made by the steering committee, alderman Pauli justified the decision not to make public financial information about the establishment in certain locations by suggesting that such an act could have weakened the boards' negotiating position (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010j, p. 5).

The fifth and last category of arguments is of an ideological nature. Such arguments were, for example, voiced as an underpinning of the decision to locate hostels on residential estates (see above) and also in relation to the democratic nature of the location decision-making process; when challenged on the latter point Weterings, for example, defended the location decision-making process as being 'democratic and normal' (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010c, p. 8).

On the whole, the rendering of account by the municipal board in round 3 of the hostels dossier was of a rather technical, or at least apolitical nature and mainly rested on the principles of fulfilling one's tasks and keeping one's promises. It contained mainly situational arguments, but also some ideological ones.

V: How did local political-executive leaders render account?

On the whole, Weterings placed the formal accountability mechanisms at the forefront of his accountability strategy. In his accountability relationship with the Municipal Council, for example, he emphasised the formal procedures for the rendering of account of the regime of representative democracy. Consider the following quote taken from a council meeting:

The choice that is made also has to do with the political deliberation of this board and what it would be prepared to contribute in payment for the location if it turns out this is needed. In November then an accountability debate can follow, in which the council can weigh all pros and cons and can question me. Then the council can decide to accept the proposal or to change it through motions and amendments. That is the procedure in this house. This is the trajectory we have agreed on with one another. I stick to the agreements which were made. The council will have the opportunity to fully and in its entirety call me to account at the end of the process.

(Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010d, pp. 9-10)

When he was being held to account by neighbourhood residents or councillors in the run-up to the location decision, Weterings also often resorted to his formal accountability relationship with the Municipal Council and the procedural arrangements that

shaped this relationship. Acting as a member of the municipal board, mayor Rombouts followed a similar strategy during public meetings with neighbourhood residents:

The council has determined the policy framework and has said that the board is responsible for the execution and the designation of locations. The council does not have a say in that, but the expectation is that the board will render account to the council for the choices made on 14 December. (...) The council has a specific role: determining the policy framework and the selection criteria in advance, scrutinising the process afterwards.

(Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010c, pp. 2, 9)

In both accountability relationships, the emphasis was thus on the formal accountability mechanisms in which the accountability relationship between the board and citizens was an indirect one.

However, the direct rendering of account in more informal settings was also a crucial element of the board's accountability strategy. Such accountability activities took place, for example, in the eighth phase of the decision-making process, of which the direct rendering of account to neighbourhood residents in public meetings was an essential element. Outside of these somewhat more formal meetings, the rendering of account took place in informal contacts between the alderman and individual neighbourhood residents.

Weterings' accountability strategy was thus a mixture of the formal and informal and indirect and direct rendering of account. While on the one hand publicly emphasising the formal and indirect accountability mechanisms was used, on the other the less visible, direct, and informal rendering of account was also utilised to its full potential, especially in the accountability relationship with neighbourhood residents.

VI: When did local political-executive leaders render account?

In an interview that preceded the location decision-making process for the hostels, Weterings portrayed his view on when local executives render account:

As far as I am concerned governing, so the daily work of in this case an alderman, and rendering account are actually activities that to a great extent take place simultaneously, (...) Governing and rendering account are really continuous, parallel processes and are very intricately woven together. They are not subsequent activities. (...) I actually spend all day rendering account. (...) So in the manner in which you make a policy, you eventually render account for the definitive decision. (...) Governing and rendering account are really two

of the same. Maybe that is the conclusion, that governing to a great extent is rendering account.

In another interview he used an expressive metaphor: “Governing and rendering account are like parallel skiing. Rendering account is not additional to the things you do, but is *in* the things you do.”

Yet, looking at when Weterings rendered account for the location decisions in the hostels dossier, his conduct did not match his conception of the rendering of account, especially with regard to two aspects of his accountability strategy, namely, simultaneity and timing. First, in relation to both neighbourhood residents and the Municipal Council, Weterings made a clear distinction between acting and rendering account for his conduct. He separated the two activities by creating specific moments for the rendering of account. What he did on numerous occasions throughout the decision-making process was make the distinction between the making of the location decisions (phase 7) and explaining these (phase 8) as clear cut as possible. When neighbourhood residents or councillors, for example, challenged the suitability of a particular location during the sounding board phase, the alderman repeatedly emphasised that the board would collect all possible information so that it could be taken into consideration when the board made its final decision. “Everything will be taken into consideration”, was his answer to practically all feedback (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010d, 2010h).

His aim was to make it as clear as possible that the location decision had not been made yet and that, formally, all options were still open. This fitted the outline of the location decision-making process, according to which the board made an autonomous and integral comparative assessment of all available locations at the end of the location decision-making procedure, not only those that the steering committee had included in its advice (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010d, p. 7). Hence, technically, the municipal board did not act until the 22 October 2010 location decision. This was something Weterings emphasised time and time again. For this reason, the approach still qualifies as a form of directive leadership and maybe even as a Decide-Announce-Defence approach. Yet, it was highly unlikely that the board would put aside the steering committee's advice (see Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010d, p. 7), which made it possible to render account for some of the main considerations in substantive terms prior to the final, formal decision. However, the rendering of account for the location decision did not take place before, or during the decision-making process, but only *ex post*, which makes the parallel skiing metaphor inappropriate in relation to the location decision.

Only the rendering of account for the procedural aspects of the board's conduct took place during the location decision-making process. Weterings, for example, on

several occasions explained and justified why he would not collect feedback on the Rijnstraat 4 location: it was not included in the Steering Committee's advice, which was a prerequisite for inclusion in the sounding board phase (see Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010d). Such procedural rendering of account took place at the request of accountees, but also at the initiative of the municipal executive itself. The board, for example, regularly informed the Municipal Council about the progress in the location decision-making process through letters to the council (e.g., 's-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2010a, 2010b), which often contained explanations and justifications of why things happened the way they did, the main argument mostly being that the board was executing the 15 December 2009 motion and that it was sticking to the July 2010 Strategy Plan. These arguments were also voiced regularly in contacts with neighbourhood residents.

Yet, as regards other procedural aspects, Weterings sometimes chose not to render account parallel to his conduct. When, for example, he was called to account by a neighbourhood resident about alleged mistakes that were made in the communication process, he did not render account to the resident concerned at that moment. Rather, he referred this particular individual to a later moment at which he would render account to the Municipal Council (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010j, p. 2). Weterings, thus, aimed at *ex post* rendering of account through his accountability relationship with the Municipal Council.

One of the primary moments for the rendering of account was to be an 'accountability debate' between the council and the board following the location decision (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010d, pp. 9-10; 2010c, pp. 2, 9). Yet, such a debate did not take place in the aftermath of the location decision-making process. Neither did it take place during the council meetings in March or April 2011, as suggested by alderman Weterings during the 14 December 2010 council meeting (see Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010e, p. 12). By the time the final interviews for the current studies had already been conducted, the municipal board had not yet rendered account for the location decisions publicly in a council meeting.

Given the controversial nature of the location decisions, this may seem to be a rather surprising fact. During the location decision-making process and in the weeks following the location decision, several political party groups expressed a desire to hold the board to account for the location decision, and the intent to organise such a debate had come up several times during public and council meetings. It had even been on the provisional agenda for the 1 December 2010 Social Affairs Council Committee. Eventually, however, that debate was cancelled at the request of its applicant (political party group Trots) and was postponed until the discussion about the February 2011 evaluation of the hostel decision-making process by B&A Consultancy. But, when the municipal board sent the finished report to the council along with its reaction to the

findings, the municipal councillors decided not to put the evaluation on the agenda for the following council meeting. Thus, a fully-fledged accountability debate did not take place, much to the surprise of a number of neighbourhood residents as well as the local executives.

At the time, councillors suggested that the evaluation might be discussed in the September 2011 council meeting, in which the possible establishment of three more hostels might be discussed. Yet, when asked what they expected of such a discussion, they focused primarily on the design of a future location decision-making process, rather than on the location decisions that had been made. Such a debate did not take place before the current case study was completed. It thus seems that, as regards the rendering of account for the location decisions that have been made, one of these days turned out to be none of these days.

The reason for this was twofold. The main explanation can be found in what Mulgan (2000) calls 'the core sense of accountability', that is, 'being called to account'. The Municipal Council was simply no longer interested in holding the executive to account over the location decision. The coalition partners mainly wanted to 'get the hostels issue over with' and did not want to stir up the fire once more. "I think I just wanted to shortcut the debate, that I wanted to *freeze it [kalt stellen]*", reported one councillor (Informant 64).

Since the municipal board had respected the frameworks that had been agreed upon with the council and the social opposition against the location had remained limited, the coalition partners believed that there was no reason to call the board to account. They perceived accountability mechanisms as an instrument only to be deployed when things go wrong.

As far as the opposition was concerned, there allegedly was little to gain from holding the board to account with regard to the location decision since the coalition's ranks were closed. Besides, by the time of the evaluation the hostels dossier lacked saliency. Other issues, like the financial cutbacks took priority. "That is also a matter of judgement: 'Does this matter now?'" held one Informant (62, councillor).

From the perspective of the Municipal Council, the accountability relationship between the council and the board in this case, thus, mainly functioned as a political-strategic instrument that was deployed only when it was expedient. It was not a standard part of the policy process, but rather functioned as a sanctioning instrument in itself: calling the alderman to account in public was already a form of naming and shaming, rather than a natural, procedural act in an accountability relationship that preceded the accountee's judgement.

This shows how the effectiveness of accountability strategies was influenced by the politics of accountability. Because it was not opportune for the council to hold Weterings to account extensively, the alderman 'got away' with rendering account for

the location decision mainly in procedural terms, rather than in substantial terms, as some councillors would have liked him to do.

The fact that no accountability debate about the hostel locations took place after they had been decided upon did not disappoint the municipal executive. Alderman Weterings was rather pleased with this result because such a debate carried an inherent risk of repoliticising the hostels dossier, which could have threatened the process of gradual acceptance of the hostels.

Part of this result, though, may still be explained by the executive's accountability strategy. First, the executive had carefully planned when it sent which information to the council and of what nature that information was. On 2 November the board sent a letter to the council in which it reported on the course of the decision-making process, rather than on what its considerations were ('s-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2010d). The document was explicitly called a *procesverantwoording*. The board thus rendered account for procedural aspects, rather than for substantive considerations. When councillors drew the locations into the discussion, for example, during the 1 December 2010 council committee, alderman Weterings explicitly reminded them that they could have placed the *procesverantwoording* on the agenda, but that they had decided not to do so (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010g, p. 8; also Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010e, p. 12) and referred them to the forthcoming evaluation of the process.

For the 14 December 2010 council meeting, the executive by voice of the mayor, who acted as chair, made an explicit distinction between the question whether the council was prepared to make available 800.000 Euros for the hostel in Zuiderparkweg and the evaluation of the location decisions. To the dismay of several councillors only the former issue was subject of the discussion, whereas some believed that the two could not be separated (Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010e, p. 10). They wondered how the council could decide to make available that amount of money for a hostel at a location that it had not yet evaluated. Indeed, strictly speaking, the location decision was not on the agenda for either of the meetings. Yet, the board did not hesitate to seize the opportunity to reinforce the disputed distinction between process and substance and to postpone substantive debate.

A similar strategy became apparent when a motion was discussed during the 14 December 2010 council meeting, in which the SP claimed that some of the underpinnings of the location decisions were insufficient. In response alderman Weterings claimed that such an evaluative remark in the form of a motion was untimely:

I can understand the question in your motion, though I do not agree with all considerations. However, I find the motion untimely. First, it is an evaluative question and therefore it should be addressed during the evaluation about

which I informed you in a council information letter last month. This letter states that I will outsource the evaluation to an external party and that I will provide it to you for your information by way of a council information letter. This letter can be discussed in the March or April 2011 council meetings. Second, I find the motion untimely because the question really should be part of the political debate about the outcome of the evaluation. It would be good for the quality of your question if you first consider the report and then decide whether or not you wish to present this motion.

(Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010e)

In his reply Weterings claimed that as of yet the SP was unable to assess the location decision-making process at its true value since the evaluation was not yet available, and referred the SP to 'the' political debate about the evaluation, not yet knowing whether or when it would take place. Thereby, Weterings tried to avoid substantive discussion about the location decision at this moment in time and eventually succeeded in doing so: the motion was retracted and the location decision was not discussed.

On the whole it seems that the board tried to avoid, or rather, postpone substantive debate on the location decisions. Another indication for this proposition was that, as regards the substantive aspects of the location decision, the board left the initiative to the council. On multiple occasions, members of the executive suggested that they were willing to render account for the location decision, if the council called them to account for it. Rather than stating that the board would render account, Weterings, for example, stated that at the end of the decision-making process the council was provided the opportunity to call the board to account (see the citation above from Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2010d, pp. 9-10). This fits with the core sense of accountability and with the formal division of tasks between the council and the board, according to which the council determines its own agenda. Yet, it can also be considered to be a reactive accountability strategy. Compared to the rendering of account for the procedural aspects of the location decision by the same board and to the willingness with which colleagues from elsewhere in the Netherlands render account for the substantive aspects of the location decision, the board's strategy cannot be called very proactive.

To sum up this section, the defining characteristics of alderman Weterings' accountability strategy in the hostels dossier were a) procedural accountability, b) *ex post* accountability, and c) reactive accountability in relation to the substantive aspects, but crucially proactive accountability with regard to the procedural aspects of the decision. The main aim seems to have been to avoid substantive debate about the location

decisions. The next section will assess the congruence of this accountability strategy with the accountees' expectations with regard to it.

8.5 Analysis and conclusions

In their evaluation report B&A Consultancy recommended the 's-Hertogenbosch municipal board explicitly explain and justify its future location decisions to councillors and neighbourhood residents. The researchers provided two arguments for their recommendation. The first was a normative one. In their view neighbourhood residents and others "have the right" to be rendered account to (Van den Berg *et al.*, 2011, p. 25). The second argument was the hypothesis that more explicit explanation and justification of location decisions would lead to insight in the location decisions for the recipients, which in turn "might" positively influence decision acceptance (Van den Berg *et al.*, 2011, p. 12). According to the researchers, the hypothesis found corroboration in neighbourhood residents' reactions to the current location decisions (Van den Berg *et al.*, 2011, pp. 22, 40, 41, 46). They claimed that "the lack of a motivation of the steering group's advice and of the board's decision did not increase support" (Van den Berg *et al.*, 2011, p. 23).

On 1 March 2011, the municipal board warmly embraced this recommendation in its reaction to the evaluation. The board recognised the importance of providing insight into the considerations that motivated the location decision. It also acknowledged that it could have provided a more elaborate explanation and justification, which could have improved the acceptance of the location decision and could have enhanced the "external legitimation" of the location decision ('s-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2011, p. 5; also Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2011b).

It seems that as regards the authority of local executives involved, the extent to which they rendered account for their location decisions did indeed make a difference. Like most of the neighbourhood residents interviewed in other cases, several of the 's-Hertogenbosch' neighbourhood residents showed a genuine interest in the considerations that motivated the location decisions regardless of their position towards the location decisions themselves. Unconditional opposition to the locations of the hostels that was irrespective of the board's considerations did exist but was limited to a real but small minority of neighbourhood residents (as confirmed by location decision experts, Informants 47 & 65). The large majority of neighbourhood residents was susceptible to argumentation (see also Shapiro *et al.*, 1994; Tyler, 2000).

In interviews, neighbourhood residents showed a genuine interest in the considerations of the board. Their interest was related to two aspects in particular. First, they wanted to be able to form a judgement on the assessment the board made in terms of

political and moral values: which values have been given preference over others, and why? They intrinsically valued the comprehensibility of the board's considerations, which enabled them to form a reasoned judgement on the decisions. They wanted to be able to retrace the steps that the board took in making the decisions. When criticising the board for not providing a thorough explanation and justification of the location decisions, the citizens interviewed demanded a more explicit and more elaborate explanation and justification, rather than a better one. What was lacking in the eyes of neighbourhood residents was an explicit underpinning of the decision rather than a sound argumentation. They criticised the lack of the substantive rendering of account, rather than the considerations that motivated the location decisions: "The current location had in fact already been decided upon from the beginning, but that does not matter. It lies much more in the executives' attitude and the way we were treated. (...) And it is about the arguments" (Informant 74, neighbourhood resident).

Councillors from the opposition as well as from the governing coalition portrayed similar views:

I am of the opinion those facilities must be realised, so I want to recognise that you will always cause resistance. Then you together have to walk down the path of: the facility will be established anyway, and it will prove itself anyway, but do that then with all the ins and outs of the deliberation and make those clear with arguments. How did you come to this location? It has also not happened that way in the third round. The comprehensibility [*volgbaarheid*] of the final part of the decision-making lacked. (...) But also in round 3 it was: yes to location X, and no to Y. It was quick and dirty work [*bierviltjeswerk*]. (...) De Stolp +2, -4, De Van Broeckhovenlaan -3, +2 (...). Just indicate a little more robustly to us and to neighbourhood residents why the one location and not the other. Corners were cut in the rendering of account. (...) The final considerations were just incomprehensible [*niet volgbaar*]. Well perhaps, I assume that those locations with those scores would have come out of the procedure for sure. But, as regards the final part of the decision-making, there was still a need for the executives to make some stuff up in the debate.

(Informant 62, councillor)

As long as the board did not make explicit its considerations, citizens had only the location to oppose to, apart from some of the assumptions that underlay the location decision-making process. Yet, in that sense, location was not the issue: it was not the location as such citizens disagreed with, but the reasonableness of the location decision, the choice between different locations: "That comparative assessment of locations... Neighbourhood residents, even if they would not be applauding, have to find

you guilty of: you have seriously looked at these, these, and these locations” (Informant 62, councillor).

Second, citizens wanted to be able to assess whether and how the executives had listened to and had considered the arguments they had put forward. Had their arguments been taken into account, and what weight did they have in the location decision? The neighbourhood residents interviewed seemed to recognise that they could not always have it their way. Yet, when a decision was made that was to their disadvantage, they requested a thorough explanation and justification thereof in terms of how their interests had been weighed against others.

The sincerity of citizen’s interest in the board’s considerations is often disputed. Were citizens not just glossing over their inherent opposition to the location as such? Empirical evidence from other studies suggests otherwise (Shapiro *et al.*, 1994; Tyler, 2000; Grimes, 2006). Moreover, neighbourhood residents’ disappointment with the explanation and justification of the location decision seems to have been an important factor in explaining their opposition to the location decision since Informants, in accordance with the earlier findings, were very well able to make a distinction between the location decision as such and the considerations that motivated it.

Support for this finding can also be found outside the setting of an interview, which may provoke socially acceptable answers as a consequence of a possible social desirability bias. Observing a variety of public meetings in ‘s-Hertogenbosch as a proverbial ‘fly on the wall’, I overheard several discussions between neighbourhood residents. Expectedly, many of these discussions revolved around the ‘improper’ location decisions and about opportunities to prevent the hostels from being established on the location that had been chosen. Such discussions were also often about the ‘danger’ that homeless addicts with mental disorders allegedly bring along. Nonetheless, the discussions between neighbourhood residents that all opposed the location decisions were, more often than not, punctuated with substantive debate about the merits of the different locations that had been under consideration and the underlying principles. Since these discussions took place between like-minded people in an informal setting, the risk of socially acceptable answers was much lower.

Citizens thus seem to make a genuine distinction between the locations as such and the considerations that motivated the location decision, on which they place intrinsic value. The location decision experts interviewed corroborate this finding:

The core of the story: why is this a good approach, for whom, and why does this alderman dare to house this group of people at that location, that story, for that you should be able to wake an alderman up at night. He must be able to reproduce it at any time and under any circumstances. An aldermen who can do that, delivers good work. Not that people will suddenly agree. But they

will have respect and see: "It has been given good thought; there is a vision, opinion behind the decision. Still, I do not agree with it." But that is allowed in the Netherlands. Very well, because then we can have a discussion about the arguments, not the attitudes, but the content.

(Informant 47, expert)

This explains why citizens voiced complaints about the fact that the board provided practically no motivation of its location decision (see also Van den Berg *et al.*, 2011).

Yet, although this fact was reckoned against Weterings as an alderman, his authority remained intact during the location decision-making process. Neighbourhood residents, councillors, the media, and other accountees believed that the location decisions, this time, were more reasonable, notwithstanding the fact that they had little opportunity to judge the reasonableness of the location decision in terms of the underlying considerations.

Two factors seem to explain this paradoxical situation. First, the locations that were chosen in round 3 were generally regarded as better locations than the ones that had been chosen in round 2. Although the new locations were also located on residential estates, they were a bit further removed from residential buildings than the Geert Grootestraat location in particular. Still, many believed that the locations were unsuitable, that the hostels should not have been located on residential estates at all, or that better locations were available. Among those were also councillors that backed up the current locations. Some others even claimed that the original Churchilllaan location was still the "ideal" location for a hostel.

The reasonableness of the location decision, thus, did not seem to follow from the reasonableness of the locations. Rather, it sprung from the location decision-making process. Although most believed that improvements could still be made to the location decision-making process in round 3, the fact that practically all actors involved could provide input was very much appreciated. Also, the opinion that the location decision-making process on the whole was transparent and was executed with sufficient care was widely shared. Although the location decision lacked a substantive legitimation, in the eyes of many the process in which it was made provided the necessary legitimation. In other words, the location decisions were perceived as being reasonable because they were made in a decision-making process that was appreciated. This was the second factor that contributed to the situation in which neighbourhood residents and councillors believed that the location decision was reasonable, even though they had little opportunity to judge the substantive considerations that motivated the location decision.

In the case of Weterings, the extensive proactive rendering of account for procedural aspects of the location decisions compensated for the perceived lack of substantive ex-

planation and justification for the location decision. “[Weterings] simply took a more well-thought-out, more decent approach. And he did not make light work of comparing the apples and oranges, that is, the locations.”, held one Informant (62, councillor).

After the twofold failure to establish the hostels in 2008 and 2009, the nature of the location decision-making process had become of major importance, especially as a result of the 15 December council motion. Evidently, the alleged quality of round 3 of the location decision-making process and of its execution has contributed to the level of acceptance of its outcome. Yet, the way in which the municipal board rendered account for the procedural aspects of it has undoubtedly contributed to their authority, that is, to the perceived reasonableness of the outcome. Placing the procedural aspects of the location decision-making process at the forefront of the rendering of account diverted attention away from the substantive, political-normative disagreement that was still thoroughly embedded in the hostels dossier. This meant that the location decision, which was still potentially highly controversial, in practice became much less political than in round 2 (Informant 72, neighbourhood resident).

The fact that the municipal board, Weterings in particular, continually, extensively and proactively explained and justified what he was doing, reassured accountees that things in fact were going according to what was agreed upon. At the same time Weterings managed to divert attention away from the intrinsic quality of the location decision-making process by mostly rendering account through formal mechanisms *ex post* in terms of him keeping his promises and executing the board's motion. This meant that the council could only effectively hold him to account for the extent to which he did so. It was given little opportunity to readjust the process on substantive/ideological grounds, or to hold him to account for his political-ideological considerations. By claiming that it was only reasonable for him to stick to the procedure as it was agreed upon, Weterings managed to redefine the reasonableness of the location decision in these terms, whereas others were more inclined to look for its reasonableness in its intrinsic quality. Hence, through his accountability strategy, Weterings managed to successfully pair the reasonable, the procedural, and the good, and thereby managed to avoid ideological debate. As far as Weterings was concerned, it was the procedure that gave him something to go by in his accountability strategy.

The effectiveness of an accountability strategy in which Weterings sought for such a footing in the procedural rendering of account was fostered by the politics of accountability: his rendering of account sufficed because it was not in the political-strategic interest of the council to hold the alderman to account extensively.

Table 19. Findings for 's-Hertogenbosch (round 3)

Relevant case characteristics	Sub-categories	Findings
<i>Initial challenge to authority</i>	<i>Political</i>	Weak challenge
	<i>Social</i>	Significant - strong challenge
<i>Characteristics of the accountability strategy</i>	<i>Who?</i>	Strong individual political accountability
	<i>To whom?</i>	Political, social, and media orientation
	<i>For what?</i>	Process, partly siting
	<i>With what arguments?</i>	Situational argumentation
	<i>How?</i>	Direct and indirect, formal, and informal
	<i>When?</i>	Proactive and reactive
<i>Rise to the challenge to authority</i>	<i>Political</i>	Moderate improvement
	<i>Social</i>	Moderate – significant improvement
<i>Relevance of the rendering of account</i>		Substantial

9

Antwerp: The sound of silence

People are happy that they receive an explanation, but that does not entail that they then agree.

(alderman De Coninck)

On 10 September 2009 the MSOC²³ Antwerp, otherwise known as the Free Clinic, opened its doors at Schijnpoortweg no. 14 in the Flemish city of Antwerp. It moved there from the nearby Van Arteveldestraat no. 64. The Free Clinic provides medical, psychological, and psychosocial support for (drug) addicts and supplies methadone to heroin addicts. The reopening of this human service facility at its new location marked the end of a five year process that aimed at relocating this facility, which until then had been located nearby Antwerp Central Station, close to De Coninckplein, one and a half kilometres from its new location. The opening day formed one of the final pieces of a lingering, tumultuous process, which hardened the relationships between the municipal executive on the one hand, and the care agency, a number of neighbourhood residents, their spokesmen and one of the political parties in the Municipal Council, Vlaams Belang, on the other. At the time the current research was conducted, however, in the autumn of 2010, most of these relationships seemed to have normalised to a large extent. At the very least, they were no longer negatively affected by the Free Clinic dossier. Many of those involved were more likely to positively evaluate the process on the whole, contrary to how they would have looked back on it four or five years earlier. The municipal board seemed to have regained much of its authority. This chapter provides a case study report and analysis of to what extent and how local political-executive leaders' accountability strategies contributed to restoring some of the municipal executives' authority.

9.1 The Free Clinic: a short history

In 1998 the Free Clinic moved from its original location in Generaal Lemanstraat, located on the southern outskirts of Antwerp's city centre, to Van Arteveldestraat, located in the heart of the city centre. There were two main reasons for the relocation. First, for a number of the 300 to 400 clients the Free Clinic served on a daily basis, Generaal Lemanstraat was hard to reach. Travelling there required one proverbial 'change of tram' too many. Second, many of the Free Clinic's clients, mostly chronic

drug addicts, traditionally had their residence on or around De Coninckplein, which was close to Antwerp Central Station. Generaal Lemanstraat was relatively far from there. By moving to Van Arteveldestraat, the Free Clinic could strengthen its contact with its clients and improve its accessibility because it was now only meters away from De Coninckplein (Informants 36 & 50). So it was, literally, 'on scene'.

Ever since the 1970s-1980s, De Coninckplein had functioned as a hangout for marginalised groups such as homeless people, alcoholics, and drug addicts. With that came all kinds of disruptions, including criminal activities, many of which were drug-related. This had substantial detrimental effects on the surrounding neighbourhoods. By early 2000 the situation had become truly problematic. In the following years, public safety on and around De Coninckplein became one of the spearheads of the local government's policies. Several strict measures were taken to counteract the rapid deterioration of the area, fuelled by repeated demands made by neighbourhood residents to 'do something about it'. De Coninckplein was to undergo a thorough cleanup in the years to come (see Schouwenaars, 2010, pp. 91-99).

One of the measures was to 'deconcentrate' human service facilities for the homeless, drug addicts, and prostitutes, which meant that at least one of the existing facilities had to be relocated. At the time, it was thought that the presence of a relatively high number of such facilities in the vicinity of De Coninckplein attracted clients who supposedly brought the detrimental effects with them. Therefore, the local executive made the decision to relocate the Free Clinic, thereby moving its clients to a location further away from De Coninckplein, or so it was believed (many of these assumptions are now being questioned; see Schouwenaars, 2010, p. 98; Decorte & Janssen, 2011; also Informants 31, 35, 36, 40, and 42).

This decision was made in the course of 2004. On 10 December 2004 the executive board ordered the public real-estate agent AG Vespa to make an offer on a property in Schijnpoortweg owned by the National Railway Company SNCB. It was located one and a half kilometres northeast of De Coninckplein, but still in Antwerp-North. The property concerned was no longer in use and was deteriorating rapidly. It was occupied by squatters and caused problems for the surrounding neighbourhoods.

From the start, the intention was to relocate the Free Clinic to that location (Municipality of Antwerp, 2004). Members of the municipal administration report that the idea was conceived by the late Tuur Van Wallendael, who at the time was the municipal executive for Social Affairs. Although Schijnpoortweg was not considered to be an optimal location for the Free Clinic, it was one of the few available locations (see Municipality of Antwerp, 2005, also Informant 42, senior administrator). The decision to opt for this particular location for the Free Clinic was part of an informal deal between Van Wallendael and the SNCB. The location decision was not the result of a

thorough comparative assessment of available locations. As such it was much more a political and pragmatic decision than a rational or technical one.

But, and in that I am very honest, in arriving at the decision there has really been little consideration concerning why it would be a good location versus why not. Frankly, Tuur Van Wallendael had the idea and that had already been half accepted by the SNCB and therefore we considered it a good idea. And all the rest is explanation afterwards. So this is *post factum* legitimation.

(Informant 42, senior administrator)

After the decision was made, it took almost five years for the Free Clinic to be reopened at its new location. But what was more important for this thesis is that it also took almost five years before neighbourhood residents were directly informed about the new location of the Free Clinic.

Originally, the intention of the municipal executive was not to communicate the location decision until the plans had been worked out in great detail. Nevertheless, the local media picked up on a leak in the spring of 2005. This caused substantial turmoil in Antwerp-North, especially since at the time residents were strongly opposing plans to locate a penitentiary facility for psychiatric patients in the former Stuivenberg hospital complex in the same area. These protests had already resulted in an action committee called *Noord Zegt Nee* (North Says No). Residents feared additional detrimental effects from the Free Clinic in an area that was already socially and economically disadvantaged (see Appendix F) and offered resistance. They launched a petition and contacted the mayor, the responsible aldermen, councillors, and the media, and filed official objections.

Similarly, the Free Clinic's staff was not particularly pleased with the municipality's choice for Schijnpoortweg (Devroye, 2005; "Antwerpse Free Clinic wil niet verhuizen naar Schijnpoort", 2005, also Informant 36). Primarily, they feared losing contact with the scene. Yet, although the Free Clinic formally was an autonomous, private corporation that was independent from local government (*vereniging zonder winstoogmerk*, abbreviated: *vzw*), it was dependent on local government for its new location. This was because it was fully dependent on public funding in its role as contractor for the Municipality of Antwerp. In addition, the Free Clinic was effectively forced to leave its location in Van Arteveldestraat because it was almost at the end of its rental contract for the property, which was run by a municipal government enterprise. The Free Clinic was, consequently, almost irrevocably bound to the board's decision about the new location, of which it was not a supporter. Although the Free Clinic did not oppose to moving its main office away from Van Arteveldestraat as such, it did oppose to losing an annex on De Coninckplein, which was still home to many of its clients. In the case

Table 20. Timeline Antwerp

Date	Event
10 December 2004	The municipal executive board ordered the public real-estate agent AG Vespa to make an offer on the Schijnpoortweg property
24 December 2004	AG Vespa decides to purchase the property
18 March 2005	The municipal board frees up 746.000 Euros to relocate the Free Clinic
21 March 2005	Aldermen Van Wallendael and Grootjans explain and justify the location decision to the Municipal Council
April 2005	Media attention
21 October 2005	The municipal board appoints AG Vespa as the project manager for the renovation of the Schijnpoortweg property
29 September 2006	Public announcement of the location decision
08 October 2006	Municipal elections
23 October 2006	Informal meeting between alderman Grootjans and neighbourhood residents
07 December 2006	First neighbourhood forum on the Free Clinic
16 February 2007	The municipal board decides to buy the Schijnpoortweg from AG Vespa
07 March 2007	Management board meeting
22 October 2008	Second neighbourhood forum on the Free Clinic
10 September 2009	Reopening of the Free Clinic
10 February 2010	Public meeting on experiences with the Free Clinic

of the Free Clinic, the municipal executive had opted for a concentration of all the facility's activities in Schijnpoortweg, whereas Free Clinic representatives conversely advocated deconcentration²⁴ of its service through multiple annexes. Furthermore, the Free Clinic's staff had initial doubts with regard to the new location itself. It feared that the new location would be less accessible for clients because Schijnpoortweg lay on the outskirts of the city, and that it would lose contact with the 'scene' on De Coninckplein (Informant 36).

Between early 2005 and September 2006 an uneasy calm settled over the 2060 neighbourhood with regard to the Free Clinic. During this period the plans were finalised by the municipal administration: the necessary financial means were collected, programme management was set up, municipal building officials advised on the location, floor plans were drawn up, building permits were issued, etc. Citizens, however, were not quite sure what to expect, especially since no official announcement had yet been made by the municipal administration or members of the executive. The plans and their status remained unclear. The Free Clinic remained one of the subjects in the mostly informal communication between the administration and executives on the one hand and neighbourhood residents' associations and active citizens on the other, but local government was hesitant to announce the location decision publicly. As late as May 2006 a local bureaucrat notes that: "Nothing official has yet been communicated to the neighbourhood, whereas we did promise to do so" (personal communication).

It was not until the end of September 2006, just after the municipal executive board had been informed of the final facility design, that official communication by the municipal administration commenced. By that time, the plans were already final and detailed: location, design, etc., had already been decided on by the board.

In the communication that followed the public announcement of the location decision, it was emphasised that the location decision had been made definitively (see Van Bakel, 2006; Wagenaar & Specht, 2010, p. 58), and that the location itself would not be the subject of discussion (e.g., mayor Janssens, in Antwerp District, 2006). In the wordings of a senior administrator it was the municipal executives' aim, and role, to emphasise that citizens were not to have a say in the location decision and that it was non-negotiable. And also that it was not necessary that citizens supported the decision. The government communication aimed at "getting neighbourhood residents to accept, not support, the inescapable fact" that the Free Clinic was to be realised in Schijnpoortweg and to "nip opposition in the bud" (Informant 42, senior administrator).

This Decide-Announce-Defend approach meant that citizens, much to their dismay, were confronted with an accomplished fact. Residents complained that they had not been provided any formal opportunity to propose alternative locations, or to give advice on the Schijnpoortweg location; an opinion that they actively communicated to councillors, local executives, and local media. "As per usual the neighbourhood has not been consulted with regard to these plans. No information, no consultation, no nothing, it was simply unloaded onto us" (Noord Zegt Nee, 2006, p. 1).

Not only neighbourhood residents had the feeling that they had been taken by surprise, so did the Free Clinic's staff, although their experience dates back to earlier on in the decision-making process, that is, early 2005:

[As an organisation we thought] that in the entire decision-making process about this establishment we really only were very little involved. That we found very troublesome. We actually even found it a little bit of a slap in the face and we have protested against it. And as an organisation we were almost a little traumatised by it, because we really had the feeling that in the entire decision-making process we were hardly involved. Also, to us it was in fact simply announced at a given time: the Free Clinic will move. We felt it coming and have acted against it, but really the decision had already been taken.

(Informant 36, staff member)

Public protest against the Schijnpoortweg location peaked in early December 2006, in the run-up to and the aftermath of the 7 December 2006 public meeting between local executives and neighbourhood residents about the Free Clinic, which will be discussed

below. Before this chapter discusses the meeting, however, it briefly looks into the period between 29 September 2006, that is, the time of the public announcement of the location decision, and 7 December 2006. This period was crucial in the accountability strategies of the local executives, which are discussed in a later section of this chapter.

Similar to the period between April 2005 and September 2006, the period between 29 September 2006 and 7 December 2006 was characterised by an uneasy calm with regard to the Free Clinic. Although the definitive location was now known to the general public, both local government and citizens seemed to hold their positions so to speak. The 8 October 2006 municipal elections played an important role in this. Multiple Informants from both local government and citizens, as well as confidential, written sources dating from that period, support the assertion that the executive board at the time tried to postpone communication and possible conflict between residents and local government about the Free Clinic until after the elections. This has not been acknowledged publicly. There is, however, sufficient evidence to support this claim (personal communication and interviews). Local executives seem to have regarded the coming of the Free Clinic as an unwelcome message that bore political and electoral risks. Consequently, it took over eight months for local government to fulfil its promise to organise a public meeting about the Free Clinic. This resulted in the issue being surrounded by uncertainty.

The period between 29 September 2006 and 7 December 2006 was riddled with ambiguity about what would happen, especially because of the role of the municipal elections. Basically, the uncertainty about the makeup of the future Municipal Council and the future executive board paralysed the communication process, although informal communication continued to some extent.

It was only when mayor Patrick Janssens took up personal responsibility for the establishment of the Free Clinic after the elections that the process regained some momentum. On 7 December 2006 a 'neighbourhood forum' was organised by the decentralised district administration. This was a regular public meeting between neighbourhood residents and representatives from local government, which takes place four to five times a year. On this occasion it was reserved for discussion about the Free Clinic. During the meeting mayor Janssens and the then intended alderman for Social Affairs, Monica De Coninck, senior local bureaucrat Tom Meeuws and Free Clinic's general manager Tino Ruyters elaborated on the plans. Citizens were provided the opportunity to ask additional questions, some of which had been collected in advance by the residents' association *vzw Slachthuis en omgeving*.

For those on the podium it was a "difficult" evening. Several Informants that were interviewed for the current research, citizens as well as government officials, describe the meeting as "turbulent" (e.g., Informants 35, 40, and 42, see also Wagenaar &

Specht, 2010, p. 58). Residents' opposition was strong and the atmosphere that evening was tense, also due to the Vlaams Belang protest that took place just outside the door.

The next day, a local newspaper concluded that the meeting had made little difference in neighbourhood residents' attitudes towards the Free Clinic (Van Bakel, 2006). Neither, however, did the meeting fuel opposition. In interviews, government officials state that the evening, looking from their perspective, "went well" (e.g., Informants 33 & 42, senior administrators). It gave the administration the opportunity to clarify the plans, to take away some of the 'false images' held by neighbourhood residents of the Free Clinic's clients and to take some pressure off the Free Clinic issue. Residents were provided with the opportunity to let off some steam and to express some of their worries.

By the time a neighbourhood advisory board was set up for the Free Clinic in early 2007, in which the conditions were discussed under which the accommodation could be realised and could continue to operate, most of the opposition seemed to have died down. Even some of the fierce protesters by then acknowledged that the trajectory towards the establishment of the Free Clinic and citizens' involvement therein looked "wonderful and promising" (personal communication, 28-01-2007). Although citizens continued to closely monitor the plans, they already showed a more constructive attitude towards the Free Clinic and its siting in Schijnpoortweg. Citizens still questioned the appropriateness of the location, in a second neighbourhood forum on 22 October 2008 for example, but at the same time thought along with the implementation (Antwerp District, 2008). This did not change after the establishment of the Free Clinic. When an evaluation meeting was organised by local government in February 2010, exactly six months after the reopening, very few citizens showed up. By then, the general attitude towards the Free Clinic as well as towards local executives throughout the 2060 neighbourhood had developed from predominantly negative to moderately positive, interviews show. Likewise, the Free Clinic's staff members' attitude towards the local executive had changed considerably.

Specific characteristics of the Free Clinic case

As such, the opposition against the siting of the Free Clinic in Schijnpoortweg was not out of the ordinary compared to the experiences elsewhere, far from it. After all, opposition to the siting of human service facilities like these is very common (see Chapter 3). Two aspects, nevertheless, are noteworthy because of their influence on the course of events.

First, although other cases included in this study, such as Ghent, like the Antwerp case included relocations of existing facilities rather than the establishment of a new facility, the latter case was somewhat special in this respect. The Free Clinic was not moved because of some technical reason, such as the fact that the existing property was

to be demolished. Rather, it was moved because it was believed that it had detrimental effects on its surroundings. The neighbourhood residents' call to do something about the situation on De Coninckplein was one of the main motives for relocating the Free Clinic. This meant that the local executive board got caught between two fires (Informant 42). On one side, inhabitants living in the vicinity of the De Coninckplein as well as the spokesmen of residents' associations (e.g., *vzw De Bilzen*) were demanding strong measures against the problems in their neighbourhood, backed up by the Municipal Council that fully supported the relocation of the Free Clinic (with the exception of *Vlaams Belang*). On the other side, inhabitants living in the vicinity of Schijnpoortweg as well as the spokesmen of residents' associations were strongly opposing the new location (see, e.g., "Ook *vzw Slachthuis* tegen komst Free Clinic", 2006), backed up by the decentralised District Council (District Council Antwerp, 2007, p. 2). The location decision was therefore particularly controversial. In the Antwerp case there were two groups of neighbourhood residents that held opposing views, rather than one. The accountability relationship between the board and neighbourhood residents consequently diversified.

Second, the composition of the Municipal Council at the time deserves special attention. One local political party was particularly engaged in the Free Clinic issue: the 'Vlaams Belang'²⁵, which can be considered to be of a markedly right-wing persuasion. The party won 20 of the 55 seats in the municipal council in the elections of 2000 and of 2006 (Agentschap voor Binnenlands Bestuur, 2012). Between 1992 and 2006, a *cordon sanitaire* was established around the Vlaams Belang, first formally, later informally. This meant that no party would enter into coalition or collaborate with Vlaams Belang (Erk, 2005, p. 496).

With regard to Vlaams Belang, public safety traditionally has been a spearhead theme in its party programme, and throughout the years Vlaams Belang brought the public safety issues around De Coninckplein to the fore. In view of the October 2006 municipal elections, the party formed a strong opinion against the relocation of the Free Clinic in Schijnpoortweg. Rather than being relocated, the party believed the Free Clinic should have been closed. The Vlaams Belang disputed the effectiveness of the facility as such ("Free Clinic blijft gemoederen beroeren", 2006; Dewinter, 2008). In any case, it held, the Free Clinic should not be relocated on residential estates, particularly not Antwerp-North (Vlaams Belang, 2007). Vlaams Belang party members were well represented in local media, regularly contacted neighbourhood residents, discussed the issue in the Municipal Council, and organised a protest against the Free Clinic outside the meeting in which local executives informed residents about the plans in December 2006. In addition, public opinion associated several of the citizens that addressed the situation on De Coninckplein with the radical right-wing signature of the Vlaams Belang, sometimes rightly, sometimes not. The involvement of Vlaams Belang

meant that the Free Clinic issue temporarily became of a highly political nature. All of those involved had to at least relate their own position on the issue to that of the Vlaams Belang. Consequently, other political parties also ended up politicising the issue.

For some, including a few opposing neighbourhood residents living in the vicinity of Schijnpoortweg even, this meant that the Free Clinic became a 'no go area' because they feared that they would become part of a political game they were not willing to play (although they were not hesitant to benefit from the political attention). Members of the municipal administration also actively reinforced the apolitical nature of the location decision by explicitly addressing citizens in the role of neighbourhood residents rather than in their role of political party members (Informant 54, neighbourhood resident). Thus, on the one hand the involvement of the Vlaams Belang meant that the issue politicised, and on the other it had a depoliticising effect. Those citizens that were desperately trying to fight an apolitical battle against the Free Clinic lost some of their momentum to the political dimension of the whole process (from personal communication, 30-09-2006).

Yet, other residents regularly contacted councillors and visited council meetings in an attempt to influence their position on the issue through lobbying (e.g., Informant 40). Others used contacts within their own parties, trying to influence the responsible municipal executives. Such partisan contacts traditionally fulfil an important role in Flemish local government (Steyvers, 2010, p. 21). Yet, it seems that because of the broad consensus that existed in the Municipal Council, the relative importance of party politics was limited.

9.2 Overcoming opposition

When asked what changed their attitudes towards the local executive, neighbourhood residents all answered in similar wording: 'adequate action and cooperation'. Citizens very much appreciated local government's measures against the problems their neighbourhood had to cope with. In 2011 the municipal board reported that the situation on De Coninckplein had substantially improved, which was also the opinion of neighbourhood residents (Municipality of Antwerp, 2011). This claim is, however, disputed by others (Decorte & Janssen, 2011, pp. 66-67), but the effort to clean up Antwerp-North has at least earned local government support and trust.

With regard to the Free Clinic, local government seems to have reacted adequately to citizens' demands with regard to the implementation of the facility. Also, several measures have been taken to compensate for the detrimental effects that citizens feared might occur as a result of the Free Clinic. For example, a permanent surveillance

camera was installed, police oversight was increased, lighting was added, and a nearby troublesome pedestrian underpass was closed off. In addition, the quick response time and the adequateness of officials' conduct as regards public safety incidents after the reopening of the Free Clinic, such as drug dealing in the vicinity of the Free Clinic, were of great importance, Informants indicated. In the opinion of most actors involved the Free Clinic operated satisfactorily, maybe even more so than expected (see Decorte & Janssen, 2011, pp. 66-68).

Likewise, most actors appreciated the accessibility of local government and government officials. After having resigned themselves to the Free Clinic's siting in Schijnpoortweg, citizens as well as care agencies discovered that local government was more than willing to cooperate with them in the implementation process. Through various communication channels there was and is regular, informal, and direct contact between citizens, residents' associations, the Free Clinic, and government officials. Residents' associations, for example, regularly met with the mayor in person to discuss the situation (Informants 35, 40, and 42).

Another factor that has contributed to the relative success of the Free Clinic's establishment was the location itself. The Free Clinic lay at a relatively remote location, and was shut in by busy roads and a railway track. The location could well be qualified as *unheimlich*. At its newfound location the Free Clinic had no direct neighbours, which local executives regarded as a benefit because it would reduce the level of disruption and would make social opposition to the location decision less likely (Informant 42, senior administrator, see also Municipality of Antwerp, 2005). And indeed, the location was relatively acceptable to neighbourhood residents because it was rather isolated. In addition, the fact that the property itself, which at the time was occupied by squatters who caused (drug related) problems for the surrounding neighbourhood, was considerably improved through renovation contributed to residents' more positive attitude.

Yet another factor that forms a large part of the explanation of the relatively swift transition from public protest to constructive cooperation was the fact that early on in the process, even before the public announcement of the location, members of the municipal administration met with key figures in the neighbourhood and advised them to choose a strategy of cooperation and coproduction rather than one of stiff opposition. Residents' spokesmen were advised to formulate those conditions under which they believed the Free Clinic could be realised in Schijnpoortweg and then to negotiate on them with the municipal administration, rather than to oppose the location decision as such. They were given the opportunity to present their 'list of demands' at the opening of the first public meeting between residents and the municipal administration, on 7 December 2006. Already at that meeting mayor Janssens endorsed the bigger part of these demands. This gesture was broadly interpreted as recognition of the position

neighbourhood residents were in, and was greatly appreciated by many. Consequently, it contributed to lessening the opposition against the establishment of the Free Clinic.

Similar informal meetings and other contacts between residents' spokesmen and members of the municipal administration, as well as personal meetings between residents' spokesmen and the mayor about the course of the implementation process, have contributed greatly to lessening the opposition among neighbourhood residents.

9.3 Challenge to authority

The decision-making process on the Free Clinic can be considered truly directive in the sense that neighbourhood residents and the Free Clinic were not involved. Also, the location decision and the decision-making process caused strong opposition throughout the neighbourhood. Already in May 2006, neighbourhood residents handed over 2.588 signatures against the establishment of the Free Clinic and a penitentiary facility for psychiatric patients to mayor Janssens. Media reported regularly on the issue at the time, noting widespread public protest. Informants reported that, at the time, an estimated 80 to 90 per cent of the surrounding area's population opposed the location decision as such (Informant 50, alderman and 54, neighbourhood resident). News about the turmoil even reached the Belgian Senate, in which it was discussed with the federal Minister of Justice on 1 June 2006 (Belgian Senate, 2006). The level of opposition was thus considerable.

In addition to opposing the location decision, a large majority of neighbourhood residents felt resentment towards the municipal executives. They used similar terms to describe the atmosphere throughout the neighbourhood and their own attitude towards the municipal executive, ranging from "profound distrust" to "hostility". Informants from both sides of the conflict held that the atmosphere throughout the neighbourhood, in relation to the executive's choice for Schijnpoortweg, was strained. Most of these feelings sprung from the fact that citizens could not understand why the local administration had chosen Schijnpoortweg as the new location for the Free Clinic; they did not see it as a reasonable decision (Informants 40 & 54). Residents believed that this part of the 2060 neighbourhood was already in a social and economical disadvantaged position and should therefore have been spared. What was especially strongly reckoned against the responsible aldermen by residents was that, after earlier plans to locate a streetwalkers' district and a penitentiary facility for psychiatric patients in the area, the former had once again "targeted 2060". This created a sense of enmity between members of the municipal executive and citizens. In their perception, neighbourhood residents fought a "battle" against the municipal executive, in which they were trying to prevent the establishment of the Free Clinic in

Schijnpoortweg (e.g., personal communication, 28 October 2006). Residents believed that the Free Clinic did not belong in their neighbourhood and, in addition, feared all sorts of detrimental effects from its establishment such as drug related crime (e.g., personal communication, 30 November 2006). The fact that the responsible aldermen in their view could not produce a reasonable argumentation for the location decision strengthened their opposition (e.g., personal communication, undated). Residents could not understand why the executives had chosen this particular location, notwithstanding their counter-arguments. These feelings, which according to Informants were widely shared throughout the neighbourhood, caused considerable turmoil among neighbourhood residents but also among business owners, for example (Van Bakel & Michiels, 2006; “Buurt slachthuis nog ongerust”, 2006; Van Bakel, 2006; “Free Clinic blijft gemoederen beroeren”, 2006).

This also negatively influenced citizens' attitudes towards local government, especially towards the aldermen that were involved: Tuur van Wallendael, Dirk Grootjans²⁶, and Philip Heylen. The latter, for example, was characterised by neighbourhood residents as a Machiavellian because of wanting to postpone communication about the Free Clinic till after the elections (personal communication, 11 September 2006). The (personal) communication between citizens and between citizens and aldermen that has been studied for the current research was riddled with such personal reproach against the aldermen involved. Neighbourhood residents strongly identified the aldermen involved with the decision they disagreed with. Before the 2006 elections, the main target was Dirk Grootjans, who at the time was alderman for public safety [*integrale veiligheid*]. However, neighbourhood residents quite naturally also focused their attention on mayor Janssens because of his responsibility for public safety.

Yet, already before the elections neighbourhood residents showed much more respect for the mayor than for the aldermen. This may be explained by the fact that Janssens took the helm in 2003 when the Antwerp government was in a political crisis (see “Dossier - Crisis in Antwerpen”, 2011). In order to do so, Janssens gave up his presidency of the Socialist Party, which earned him much respect. In addition, Janssens' 2006 electoral victory was overwhelming (Van Aelst & Nuytemans, 2007). Later on, mayor Janssens gained even more of residents' trust because of his strong personal involvement with the Free Clinic dossier when he became the board's main spokesman for the dossier (Informants 35, 40, and 54).

Yet, whereas residents did direct their attention to individual aldermen and the mayor, their resentment was more generally directed towards the municipal administration as a whole. By way of illustration consider the following quote from an e-mail one of the citizens involved in the protests sent to his fellow neighbours: “The municipal executive has kicked us in the balls once again. They beat us to the punch. The Free

Clinic is a fact, just before the [municipal, NK] elections” (neighbourhood resident, personal communication).

As a consequence, the aldermen lost a considerable amount of authority over the Free Clinic in their relationship with residents that lived nearby the Free Clinic’s new location. The latter strongly rejected the considerations that motivated the location decision, which resulted in a feeling of anger and an attitude of resentment towards the board and its members. As has already been said, the Free Clinic’s staff initially held similar feelings.

These, however, were not shared by other social and political actors. First of all, residents that lived near De Coninckplein were not only happy that something was being done about the undesirable state their neighbourhood was in, they also very well understood the location decision for the Free Clinic (Informants 31 & 35). Although most would have preferred the Free Clinic to move out of the 2060 area altogether, they did recognise the fact that a substantial part of the facility’s clients lived in the vicinity. They did not necessarily agree with the location decision, especially since even the decision-makers themselves held that it was not ideal (e.g., alderman Grootjans in Municipality of Antwerp, 2005, pp. 547-549). Yet, they understood why this alternative had been chosen, given the socio-political context in which the decision was made. The same goes for all the parties in the Municipal Council with the exception of the Vlaams Belang. Those parties accepted, but not necessarily agreed with, the argumentation provided by the aldermen because of their strong and collective commitment to improving the situation around De Coninckplein.

Although neighbourhood residents protested against the Schijnpoortweg location, it did not take long before they resigned themselves to the fact that the Free Clinic was to be established on that particular location. This may be explained by the fact that residents soon realised that many of the Free Clinic’s clients came from the 2060 area itself, which meant that a facility in the area was indeed desirable (Informants 38, 40, and 54, neighbourhood residents). In addition, many of them agreed that the situation at De Coninckplein had become intolerable. Neighbourhood residents did suggest alternative locations to the municipal administration, but soon realised that the local executive board was not going to change its mind, especially since plans were already at such an advanced stage. Residents took advantage of many of the political and legal opportunities they had to try and stop the establishment of the Free Clinic, but already quite early in the process the bigger part of the protests against the Schijnpoortweg location itself was for strategic rather than for substantive reasons (from personal communication, 29-10-2006). Neighbourhood residents were trying to get rid of the Free Clinic, rather than continue to dispute the reasonableness of the location decision. As early as 30 September 2006 one of the main action committees, *Noord Zegt Nee*, indicated that it found the establishment of the Free Clinic in Schijnpoortweg acceptable if a

number of strict conditions were met in advance. Considering the moment of the first official announcements made by local government just one day earlier, this was quite unexpected. It should be noted, however, that continuous informal communication took place between the administration and residents' representatives in the run-up to the actual announcement. Further, the Schijnpoortweg location had already been brought to the fore by the media in early 2005, which gave residents the opportunity to become somewhat used to the idea.

In general, by 2011 Informants believed that the location decision was reasonable. What they mentioned in particular was the fact that, contrary to what many residents feared, at its current location the Free Clinic caused very few problems in terms of detrimental effects on the neighbourhood (see also Decorte & Janssen, 2011, pp. 66-68). Minor incidents still occurred, but residents were not particularly disturbed by these. They acknowledged that the relatively remote nature of the location had contributed to the low level of disturbance. Neighbourhood residents recognised the reasonableness of choosing a location relatively distant from the city centre that, in addition, lay isolated from residential estates (Informants 35, 40, and 54). They also mentioned the good accessibility of the facility for its clients thanks to its location nearby a tram and underground stop. In short, most Informants believed that the facility was reasonably well embedded in its urban environment. At the time of the current research, the only real 'problem' in the perception of neighbourhood residents was the fact that the adjacent gas station, which was temporarily restored in anticipation of the Free Clinic, had been abandoned again and now formed a hideout for, among others, some of the Free Clinic's clients.

The attitude of the Free Clinic's staff towards its location also developed positively over the years, especially after the reopening in September 2010. Many of the fears that the Free Clinic's staff had beforehand did not become a reality: clients were still able to reach the facility, although it had become more difficult (Decorte & Janssen, 2011, p. 68), all but one of the staff members continued to work at the Free Clinic, and very few of the problems from De Coninckplein accompanied the Free Clinic to its new location. In the staff's perception the Free Clinic operated relatively well in Schijnpoortweg, contrary to what some of them had expected (Informant 36).

Overall, the reasonableness of the location decision was more positively evaluated by accountees in 2011 than it was in 2006 and 2009. It would be incorrect, though, to suggest that the local executives have convinced residents of the reasonableness of their considerations. Rather, the facts proved the arguments that local executives had provided to be correct. The level of detrimental effects, for example, turned out to be rather low, thanks to effective measures taken by the municipal administration, amongst others. In other words, a large number of residents' fears turned out to be unfounded, which led them to believe that the Schijnpoortweg location was not that

bad after all. All this was not a matter of justification or explanation of the location decision by the municipal executives, though.

There is, however, one important aspect of the location decision in relation to which one can safely say that by the time the current research was conducted, residents had become convinced of its reasonableness partly due to the fact that the local executives explained their considerations: the decision to locate the facility in the 2060 area. Many of the objections that citizens lodged against the location decision targeted that particular aspect of the location decision. A large majority of neighbourhood residents believed that it was “wrong” to relocate the Free Clinic in the 2060 area. Citizens’ objections partly sprang from motives that can be considered to be an element of the NIMBY phenomenon in the sense that they strongly related to the individual interests of those involved. Yet, several citizens had principle objections to the executives’ choice for the 2060 area, which was widely regarded as a vulnerable neighbourhood (see Appendix F), not only by neighbourhood residents but also by the municipal administration. Although early on in the process the main representatives of neighbourhood residents had realised that it would be very difficult to keep the Free Clinic out of the area (personal communication 28-09-2006), they still rejected the idea in principle and raised a broad range of objections to it. They had resigned themselves to the fact that the Free Clinic would be established in Schijnpoortweg but did not (yet) believe that it was a reasonable thing to do.

Residents raised several objections, the most important of which were (e.g., vzw Slachterij en omgeving, 2007):

- a) The then level of, and risk of, further degeneration and deprivation of the neighbourhood,
- b) an alleged shortage of social and economical resilience of the neighbourhood (see also Busch-Geertsema, 2007; Bosch Meda, 2009),
- c) the then level of criminality in the neighbourhood,
- d) a risk of all sorts of drug related disorder,
- e) the fact that the Free Clinic was to be realised in the immediate vicinity of *Park Spoor Noord*, which is a newly established popular recreation area.

As has already been mentioned, several of the fears residents experienced turned out to be unfounded once the Free Clinic was established. Yet, some of their principle arguments against the Schijnpoortweg location still applied. Many still believed that the Free Clinic should have been realised in another part of the city of Antwerp because of the limited social and economical resilience of the 2060 area. Yet, in accordance with the Free Clinic’s staff, others believed that it would have been a better option

to deconcentrate the Free Clinic's services by opting for a number of smaller annexes throughout the city, rather than for one central facility that services the entire population in Schijnpoortweg (e.g., Informant 54).

These arguments aside, the residents' representatives reported that by 2011 they believed that it was a reasonable decision to locate the Free Clinic in Schijnpoortweg. Most importantly, they had come to realise the effectiveness of locating the facility in the 2060 neighbourhood since this was where a considerable part of the Free Clinic's clients lived (e.g., Informants 40 & 54, neighbourhood residents). Although they did not necessarily agree with the decision to relocate the Free Clinic in Schijnpoortweg and would have preferred other locations, they understood why the municipal executives opted for that particular location, given their task to solve the problems of De Coninckplein and the availability of a suitable property in Schijnpoortweg. They believed that the decision was justified, in the sense that it was fair to locate the facility in the neighbourhood where most clients lived. In other words, by 2011, neighbourhood residents believed that it was a reasonable and defensible decision. One Informant (40, neighbourhood resident) put it this way: initially he had held a negative attitude towards both the location and the location decision, but by the time of the interview, that is, in the spring of 2011, only the negative attitude towards the location remained. Although he still disagreed with the location decision as such, he had come to view the location decision as a reasonable one. This attitude change seems to be the result of close contact between the Informant, the mayor, at least one of the aldermen, and members of the municipal administration. Although it is hard to establish the stand-alone influence of the rendering of account as it took place in these meetings, it was certainly one of the contributing factors. This particular Informant reported on how members of the municipal executive had explained to him why they made the decision to locate the Free Clinic in Schijnpoortweg and what their considerations were. Consequently, over time he had come to believe that these were reasonable explanations.

More generally, other Antwerp Informants also speak of how they have come to understand the location decision as it was made by the municipal executive. In particular they refer to the 7 December 2006 meeting, in which mayor Janssens provided an explanation of the location decision, as well as informal meetings with members of the municipal executives. What was appreciated in particular was the fact that on multiple occasions the members of the municipal executive emphasised that in their opinion, Schijnpoortweg was not the ideal location for the Free Clinic, but that it was a 'defendable alternative', given the municipalities ambitions, the limiting conditions with regard to the availability of suitable properties, and budgetary restrictions. Neighbourhood residents described the location decision as a 'compromise' or as a palatable solution to the situation the municipal executive was in. Likewise, citizens very much appreciated the fact that the municipal executive emphasised that it was not 'bringing

good news' (Van Bakel, 2006; Wagenaar & Specht, 2010, p. 58). It seems that neighbourhood residents interpreted executives' recognition of their 'failure' to find an ideal location as recognition of the validity of their arguments against the Schijnpoortweg location, or as recognition of their position as stakeholders. The perception of the necessity to come to a compromise seems to have contributed to the belief that the decision was reasonable. Such an understanding of the executives' motives can only come from the fact that the local executives involved made their otherwise inaccessible considerations explicit.

The question remains whether the motives that executives provided were indeed the 'real' considerations that motivated the location decision. Section 9.1 has already indicated that this may not be the case since the location decision was not the result of a thorough comparative assessment of available locations. Nevertheless, one can still consider the motives that were provided as the genuine reasons for upholding the location decision in the light of strong social opposition from the surrounding neighbourhoods.

Likewise, neighbourhood residents, contrary to most of their Dutch counterparts, seem to believe that the municipal executive opted for a reasonable decision-making procedure by opting for a directive way of making the location decision. Individual neighbourhood residents as well as their spokesmen portrayed respect for (the functioning) of the representative democracy. Consider:

You only find out after it has already happened. But come on, that's the council, and you choose it. And if they vote 'yes', what can you then bring in against it, right? They can do the Swiss model and have a referendum for everything and anything, but... If you have a referendum, then you should choose neither a parliament, nor a council. (...) In a democracy, you choose these people, and if you choose, then you cannot come and whine afterwards... If you do not agree, then you just choose someone else next time.

(Informant 54, neighbourhood resident)

From a political realist perspective, one might be inclined to explain this attitude by the broad consensus that could be observed in the Antwerp Municipal Council, which made it unlikely that social opposition to the location decision would make a difference. This fact was strengthened by the monistic relations between the Flemish councils and the boards of mayor and aldermen (see Wayenberg *et al.*, 2011, p. 84). The majority of the Municipal Council, that is, all political party groups with the exception of Vlaams Belang, saw the location decision as reasonable and supported the board's decision. Illustrative for this position was councillor Tanja Smit's²⁷ remark in the 21 March 2005 council meeting (Municipality of Antwerp, 2005, p. 545):

The move of Free Clinic to Schijnpoort testifies to our party group of insight in the issue at hand and of vision. The establishment or move of the facility just needs to be in one of the localities where the problems occur. In all honesty we should admit that this is the 2060 neighbourhood. A move to that neighbourhood is therefore nothing other than a wise decision.

One may be inclined to suggest that the broad consensus in the council was one of the reasons why neighbourhood residents were not likely to challenge the board's decision. Yet, in the interviews that were conducted for this study, Flemish Informants in general, not only those from Antwerp, irrespective of the composition of their Municipal Council, were less likely than the Dutch to challenge the legitimacy of directive decision-making by the board. Whether this should be considered to be a sign of active support for the (idea of) representative democracy (see Hay, 2007), or, alternatively, as a form of acquiescence to their limited influence on the decision-making, is not the subject of the current study. Yet, with the scholarly work of Hofstede (2001, pp. 83-112) in mind, one could hypothesise that this was a manifestation of the difference in power distance between Flanders and the Netherlands (see also Chapter 11). Similar observations can be made with regard to citizens' expectations concerning the rendering of account by Antwerp's municipal executives, which will be discussed in the next section.

9.4 Antwerp's local executives' accountability strategies

This section provides an overview of the accountability strategies developed by political-executive leaders in the Free Clinic case between December 2004 and the autumn of 2010 and the extent to which they corresponded with the expectations citizens and other accountees had thereof. It will also indicate to what extent and how local political-executive leaders' accountability strategies contributed to restoring some of the municipal executive's authority. To structure the analysis, the model of accountability from Chapter 3 is used, which consists of the six dimensions 'Who?', 'To whom?', 'For what?', 'With what arguments?', 'How?', and 'When?'. With regard to each dimension accountees' expectations and accountors' accountability strategies will be discussed, as well as the (non)congruence between the two.

I: Who rendered account?

In the period between December 2004 and November 2006, the status of the decision to relocate the Free Clinic was still very unclear in the eyes of neighbourhood residents, which meant that they had only a limited need or ability to hold someone to account

with regard to it. At the time, there were contacts between the municipal executive and neighbourhood residents, but these were considered as attempts to influence the decision rather than as attempts to hold those responsible to account, especially in the eyes of the latter. When the final decision was communicated in the autumn of 2006, it was still not quite clear to citizens who they should address. The role of accountant was shared by at least two of the aldermen, Van Wallendael and Grootjans, and to a lesser extent Heylen, and also the mayor. To the dismay of neighbourhood residents, accountability was diffuse. Citizens' attempts to hold the board to account lacked focus because at the time there was no clear addressee.

This was mainly due to the municipal elections. With these coming up, the aldermen were hesitant to position themselves as accountors. The Free Clinic carried considerable political risk and the aldermen wanted to postpone public debate until after the elections. Consequently, the elections surrounded the location decision with uncertainty since the positions of municipal executives as well as councillors were insecure at the time. It was uncertain whether the responsible aldermen would return after the elections and whether they would still have the same portfolio.

After the 8 October 2006 municipal elections the picture changed. When Dirk Grootjans did not return as the alderman for public safety, mayor Janssens became the municipal executives' main spokesman with regard to the Free Clinic. He positioned himself as the main accountant, which substantially improved the accountability relationship between the board and neighbourhood residents because the latter now had a clear addressee with regard to the location decision for the Free Clinic. It was also advantageous for the executive because the mayor benefitted from a substantial amount of electoral legitimacy (Van Aelst & Nuytemans, 2007) and neighbourhood residents very much appreciated the fact that it was the figure of the mayor who became closely involved. Without exception Informants, including some of the chief opponents, expressed their appreciation for the personal commitment with which mayor Janssens defended the relocation of the Free Clinic and the openness with which he explained and justified the location decision.

One other important aspect of the 'Who rendered account?' question was the fact that the Free Clinic's staff, its general manager in particular, was explicitly exempted from having to explain and justify the location decision, with which they could not readily agree. General manager Ruyters was screened off from the holding to account by neighbourhood residents. Through mayor Janssens, the municipal executive took full responsibility for the location decision, in its contact with the Free Clinic and others, but also publicly. This meant that the Free Clinic could refer citizens that were trying to hold its staff members to account for the location decision to the municipal executive. General manager Ruyters was not expected to defend or justify the location decision. Furthermore, this gave the Free Clinic the opportunity to express its doubts

with regard to the location. As a consequence, it was evident for neighbourhood residents who was the accountor and who, hence, could be called to account. To a great extent this eliminated the many hands problem.

It seems that this was a factor that contributed substantially to restoring some of the municipal executive's authority. Among neighbourhood residents there was a strong expectation that those who made the location decision, in this case the municipal executives, were also the ones who should provide an explanation and justification for it. Neighbourhood residents perceived a direct accountability relationship with municipal executives because they were directly affected by the board's decision. They also appreciated having been able to address a particular person. What was particularly important here was that the Antwerp mayor, as well as the aldermen that functioned as spokespersons earlier on in the process, was directly accessible in the sense of being approachable. Citizens very much appreciated direct, personal, face-to-face contact with municipal executives, in both formal and informal settings (Informants 35, 40, and 54). When, in the experience of neighbourhood residents, a municipal executive was more difficult to reach this was readily held against him. In the interviews, several of Antwerp's (former) aldermen were blamed for this by neighbourhood residents.

Still, accountability was shared with others to some extent within the municipal administration. Several local bureaucrats functioned as vital links between the municipal administration and neighbourhood residents. Among them were Dirk Kint, who coordinated the district meeting in which neighbourhood residents participated (*Stedelijk Wijkoverleg Antwerpen-Noord*), and Meeuws, who was the public safety manager. These officers formed a permanent informal contact for neighbourhood residents with regard to the Free Clinic. They met with neighbourhood residents regularly. The nature of these contacts differed substantially but they mostly revolved around the implementation of the Free Clinic in its surroundings and citizens' involvement therein. Yet, especially in case of the latter, the rendering of account was also involved here. On several occasions, among others the 7 December 2006 public meeting and some of the informal contacts, Meeuws explained and justified the location decision to neighbourhood residents, whereas formally he did not bear any responsibility for it. His role therein, however, was a modest one.

II: To whom did local political-executive leaders render account?

With regard to the decision to relocate the Free Clinic in Schijnpoortweg, Antwerp's municipal executives rendered limited account to their prime political accountee, that is, the Municipal Council. Especially in the formal setting of Municipal Council meetings, the location decision as such did not receive a great deal of attention. The location decision was only discussed in the 21 March 2005 council meeting when its

reasonableness was challenged by Vlaams Belang (Municipality of Antwerp, 2005, pp. 543-550). No extensive accountability debate took place, though.

This may be explained by the broad consensus that existed between the coalition partners and the unwillingness to risk political controversy over the location decision. The majority of the crucial decisions by the council that were needed to acquire the Schijnpoortweg property and to make it suitable for the establishment of the Free Clinic were of a limited political nature, in the sense that the necessary support had been created prior to the moments of formal decision-making in the council; generally, decisions were passed on the nod. This can be explained, at least partially, by the fact that the Antwerp coalition was a broad one, with SP, VLD, CD&V, and Agalev together holding 34 of the 55 seats until the 2006 municipal elections, and that in the Flemish local government system the mayor and aldermen are not only members of the board but municipal councillors as well. In addition, the informal *cordon sanitaire* against the Vlaams Blok as the main opposition party, holding 20 seats, played an important role in this because it kept other accountees from politicising the issue.

It may also be explained by the dominance of the board over the council (see Verhelst *et al.*, 2010, p. 43). Informally, though, the aldermen were held accountable by councillors and party members (Informant 50, alderman), which can be explained by the prominent role of political parties in the Flemish monistic system (see Verhelst *et al.*, 2010, pp. 41-42). The significance of this in the case of the Free Clinic, however, was limited since the Schijnpoortweg location was not considered as controversial among the large majority of councillors (see Municipality of Antwerp, 2005, pp. 543-550).

The Board of Mayor and Aldermen was held to account by the Vlaams Belang, though, which strongly opposed the location decision. In response, on several occasions the aldermen explained and justified the location decision to Vlaams Belang representatives (Municipality of Antwerp, 2005, pp. 543-550; 2006, pp. 4226-4227). Yet, according to Informants, this did not take place outside formal settings (Informants 50 & 55, aldermen and senior administrator). Although the accountors recognised that they had a political accountability relationship with Vlaams Belang, they felt less of an obligation or need to actively render account to them.

By contrast, the municipal executives did actively render account to three other actors that were involved in the Free Clinic dossier: the Free Clinic's staff, neighbourhood residents, and the media.

Early on in the process, when the location decision had been made *de facto*, that is, winter 2004/spring 2005, mayor Janssens, and the aldermen Van Wallendael and Grootjans, discussed the location decision with representatives from the Free Clinic on several occasions. These meetings could be characterised as mutual attempts to influence the other's positions on the issue, that is, as negotiations. But, for two reasons, they should be characterised as accountability activities.

First, it has proved impossible to trace back ‘the’ definitive decision to locate the Free Clinic in Schijnpoortweg. Such a decision was not made. Rather, a series of decisions led up to the establishment of the Free Clinic in Schijnpoortweg. None of the actors involved that were interviewed for the current study could pinpoint the moment of decision. Besides, representatives from the local government, the Free Clinic as well as citizens indicated that the *de facto* choice for Schijnpoortweg had already been made ‘in the minds of the executives’ early on in the process, that is, by the end of 2004, which meant that the negotiations between local government and Free Clinic did not amount to much in the spring of 2005. There is no well-founded reason for excluding communicative acts that were undertaken after the municipal executive’s intention to house the Free Clinic in Schijnpoortweg materialised through the order to purchase the property. Second, during the meetings between members of the municipal executives and Free Clinic’s representatives, on several occasions the former amplified on their considerations to locate the Free Clinic in Schijnpoortweg. These communicative actions were manifestations of the rendering of account. Hence, the Free Clinic was rendered account to by members of the executive.

Neighbourhood residents were rendered account to as well, mainly during the 7 December 2006 public meeting, which was attended by more than 150 people (Wagenaar & Specht, 2010, p. 58). Before and after that meeting, the rendering of account to neighbourhood residents concentrated on the spokesmen of different groups of neighbourhood residents that were involved, that is, *vzw De Bilzen*, *vzw Slachthuis en omgeving*, and *Noord Zegt Nee*.

The media were also rendered account to because they were actively engaged in the Free Clinic dossier. Most notably, the newspapers *Gazet Van Antwerpen*, *Het Nieuwsblad*, and *De Standaard*. As regards the location decision as such, they did, however, not act extensively as autonomous political forums, but rather as neutral reporters.

III: For what did local political-executive leaders render account?

On several occasions members of the Antwerp municipal executive explained and justified the decision to relocate the Free Clinic in Schijnpoortweg. In the 21 March 2005 Municipal Council meeting, for example, both alderman Van Wallendael and alderman Grootjans explained why they had opted for the Schijnpoortweg location, in response to critical questions from Vlaams Belang (Municipality of Antwerp, 2005, pp. 545-550). Similarly, mayor Janssens explained what the reasoning was behind the choice for Schijnpoortweg during the December 2006 meeting with neighbourhood residents and their spokesmen.

Yet, when considering the rendering of account by members of the Antwerp executive it becomes apparent that the location decision as such was not the main focus of their accountability activities. The accounts the executives provided consisted only partially

of justifications of the considerations that motivated the choice for Schijnpoortweg at the expense of other available locations. Rather, their explanation and justification of why Free Clinic was relocated in Schijnpoortweg focused on other aspects of the decision, mainly: a) why Free Clinic had to be removed from De Coninckplein, and b) why Schijnpoortweg was a defensible location in itself. What they were trying to show, predominantly, was that it was a safe and sensible option to house the Free Clinic in Schijnpoortweg. The (political) considerations that motivated the location decision received far less attention. One could say that the executives were trying to show the reasonableness of the act of reopening the Free Clinic in Schijnpoortweg, rather than trying to show the reasonableness of the location decision.

This strategy seems to have been motivated by two considerations. First, an approach like this corresponds with the way in which the decision to relocate the Free Clinic in Schijnpoortweg was made. Basically, the decision was largely based on considerations other than the suitability of Schijnpoortweg in comparison with other available locations. As justified as the 'real' considerations may have been, they meant that the municipal executive could not primarily explain and justify its location decision in terms of the comparative quality of the Schijnpoortweg location. A pragmatic decision as such cannot easily be explained in ideological terms, even though the pragmatics of the decision could well be defensible.

Second, it seems that neighbourhood residents, even though they strongly opposed the location decision, were not so much interested in what the municipal executive's considerations behind the location decision were. When asked what these considerations were, most of the Antwerp residents answered in terms similar to 'I do not know'. Some of them then started to reconstruct, or make up, a possible justification for the location decision, but they generally were unable to reproduce the arguments that they were offered. Neither do they, other than neighbourhood residents from some of the other cities included in this study, express any kind of dissatisfaction with this lack of insight. Rather, they quickly move on to the implementation of the Free Clinic and complaint management. It seems that they were genuinely less interested in the considerations than Informants in the other cases. The 'Why here?' question was not at the top of their list. Instead, they were very much involved with the way in which the local administration dealt with the state of their neighbourhood and the way in which local government dealt with, for example, the poor state of the Schijnpoortweg bridge that was near to Free Clinic's new location. Residents were more concerned with possible disturbance caused by the Free Clinic than with the comparative suitability of the Schijnpoortweg location. Likewise, they showed only limited interest in how the decision was made, which may explain why the municipal executives rendered limited account with regard to the decision-making process.

The fact that the municipal executives involved devoted only a limited amount of attention to the considerations that motivated the location decision, thus matches citizens' expectations with regard to that. A possible explanation for this might be that early on in the process the local administration successfully managed to divert attention away from the specific location to the implementation of the facility into its surroundings. What is more, those residents that opposed the location decision mainly opposed the decision to locate the Free Clinic in the 2060 area. They were less interested in the particular location in Schijnpoortweg, which was rather isolated and had few direct neighbours. The relative remoteness of the Free Clinic may have tempered citizens' interest in the considerations that motivated the location decision. Also, they perceived the relatively remote location to be a reasonable one.

IV: With what arguments did local political-executive leaders render account?

The main arguments the municipal board put forward in rendering account were situational in nature. In the communication with neighbourhood residents these were that the Schijnpoortweg property was deteriorating rapidly and that the site was somewhat more isolated than the location in Van Arteveldestraat (e.g., Van Bakel, 2006; Antwerp District, 2006; Antwerp District, 2008). In their communication with the Municipal Council, aldermen Van Wallendael and Grootjans put forward the same arguments. They also mentioned the fact that the new location was affordable, that it had a greater capacity, that it was accessible, and that the location could easily be surveilled by the police (Municipality of Antwerp, 2005). These are all mainly situational arguments.

There was, however, one important additional argument: the board wanted to relocate the facility in the 2060 neighbourhood, as this was where the problems originated to some extent. This was not framed as a societal argumentation in terms of an increase in the effectiveness of the facility's care, but rather as an ideological argument.

V: How did local political-executive leaders render account?

Councillors were mainly rendered account to in council meetings, and to a lesser extent in informal contacts in the corridors of city hall.

Neighbourhood residents were mainly rendered account to in the 7 December 2006 public meeting, in which mayor Janssens explained and justified the location decision. Nevertheless, some of the informal meetings between alderman Grootjans and neighbourhood residents' representatives may also be considered as instances of rendering account. Neighbourhood residents were also rendered account to more generally through the media.

After the first public meeting, neighbourhood residents continued to meet with members of the municipal executive and local bureaucrats on several occasions, but

these meetings were dominated by discussions about the implementation of the facility and other aspects of the Free Clinic's establishment, rather than by the rendering of account. The rendering of account, however, continued in more informal meetings with representatives of residents' associations and the mayor. In the 22 October 2008 neighbourhood forum, account was rendered again by mayor Janssens and alderman De Coninck in a somewhat more formal setting (Antwerp District, 2008).

VI: When did local political-executive leaders render account?

The rendering of account for the Free Clinic location decision took place at different moments in time depending on the forum. First, the responsible aldermen explained the decision to the Municipal Council in the 21 March 2005 council meeting (Municipality of Antwerp, 2005). The immediate cause for the discussion was that fact that, thanks to a leak, a local newspaper reported on the relocation of the Free Clinic. However, it would be incorrect to state that local government lost control of the stream of communication since some Informants suggest that the leak originated from one of the aldermen involved. The brief public debate that followed the publication of the article formed the main body of the executive's accountability activities with regard to the Free Clinic in its relationship with the Municipal Council. On several other occasions, the Free Clinic was the subject of discussion between the board and the council, but on these occasions, only limited rendering of account took place with regard to the location decision (e.g., Municipality of Antwerp, 2006, pp. 4226-4227).

The rendering of account to the Free Clinic occurred mainly in the first few months after the location decision, especially in the spring and summer of 2005. During this period, the relationship between local government and Free Clinic's representatives transformed from one of enmity to one of cooperation. Having been confronted with a directive location decision from the municipal executive before, the Free Clinic now experienced a more constructive atmosphere in which the renovation of the Schijnpoortweg property was discussed. Slowly but surely they came to see the reasonableness of the location decision given the context in which it was made.

The rendering of account to neighbourhood residents took a lot longer to commence. Basically, it did not take place until the decision was communicated to the neighbourhood in late 2006, which was roughly two years after the decision had been made to purchase the Schijnpoortweg property. So the rendering of account did not take place before the plans had been finalised in full detail. There seem to be two main reasons for this.

First, the municipal executive aimed at avoiding discussions with citizens about the location. Since the plans were in such an advanced phase, there were few opportunities for citizens to influence the decision-making other than the formal opportunities to file objections to the building permit, etc. Local government deliberately confronted

citizens with an accomplished fact. The rendering of account in that sense was truly *ex post* in nature.

Second, the rendering of account was purposely postponed until after the 8 October 2006 municipal elections. The aldermen believed that the Free Clinic carried an electoral risk. They were unwilling to render account before the elections, even though neighbourhood residents were challenging them to elaborate on their considerations before these (personal communication, and Informant 36). The rendering of account with regard to the Free Clinic location decision was thus put off until after one of the main sanctioning moments in the accountability relationship between the board and its electorate, which is a clear manifestation of the politics of accountability.

After the initial rendering of account in 2006, the explanation and justification of the location decision continued in both formal and informal settings until at least 22 October 2008, when a second neighbourhood forum was held on the Free Clinic.

In addition to getting off to a slow start, the rendering of account by the political-executives in the Antwerp case was of a reactive nature. The aldermen waited for councillors and neighbourhood residents to hold them to account, before they started to render account.

9.5 Analysis and conclusions

To sum up, the authority of the Antwerp aldermen in the Free Clinic dossier was not strongly challenged by political actors. It was challenged politically by Vlaams Belang, but not by the majority of the council. Socially, it was challenged by neighbourhood residents and residents' associations living in the vicinity of Schijnpoortweg, but at the same time, the reasonableness of the decision to move the Free Clinic away from De Coninckplein to another part of 2060, was affirmed by a second group of neighbourhood residents living in the vicinity of De Coninckplein. Initially though, the reasonableness of the location decision was nevertheless disputed by a considerable group of neighbourhood residents, which did affect the specific authority of the aldermen.

Overlooking the accountability strategy of the Antwerp aldermen, it can be concluded that the aldermen did not rest heavily on the rendering of account in an attempt to overcome opposition in the Free Clinic dossier. They did not extensively explain and justify the location decisions to accountees. Rather, they relied on taking the sting out of the confrontation early on in the process by convincing opposing citizens to negotiate rather than to protest, even before the public announcement of the location decision. Furthermore, they relied on showing rather than telling. By adequately responding to complaints, they minimised the number of incidents, which lessened opposition. Thus, being in close contact with neighbourhood residents and being

readily accessible was crucial. Eventually, neighbourhood residents in general came to believe that the location decision, although not preferable, was reasonable, but it was not primarily the rendering of account that was the deciding factor.

The main motivation for this strategy was that local government held that explaining and justifying the location decision would not result in an account that was acceptable to accountees, neighbourhood residents in particular. “It was never going to be a good story”, one Informant said (55, senior administrator). For that reason the political-executives primarily relied on other means.

Nevertheless, the executives did render account for the location decision in an attempt to legitimise it *ex post*. With regard to the accountability strategy it can be concluded that it was much more effective when accountability was individualised, that is, when the mayor became the prime accountant after the municipal elections, rather than three aldermen who shared accountability before those. It can also be concluded that, to the extent that the rendering of account positively affected authority, informal accountability mechanisms were important in convincing neighbourhood residents of the reasonableness of the location decision.

The main explanatory factor for the effectiveness of the accountability strategy of the aldermen and the mayor, to the extent that it was relevant, was the fact that they managed to depoliticise the location decision by focusing their accounts on the reasonableness of the siting of the facility, rather than on a choice between alternative locations. Nevertheless, showing the reasonableness of the ideological consideration to relocate the facility within 2060 was also relevant. Shielding the Free Clinic off from having to render account also proved effective because it eased the relationship between the board and the Free Clinic’s staff.

Still, the effectiveness of the accountability strategy was negatively affected by the sharing of accountability at first, and also by the hesitance to render account for the location decision in the run-up to the 2006 municipal elections. The failure to provide a convincing account at the time, led neighbourhood residents to further question the reasonableness of the location decision, however, in the end they generally agreed. As far as they were concerned, their resentment against the aldermen with regard to the location decision was “truly over” (e.g., Informant 40, neighbourhood resident). This did not mean that all of them agreed with the location decision, but they did now perceive it to be a reasonable one.

Table 21. Findings for Antwerp

Relevant case characteristics	Sub-categories	Findings
<i>Initial challenge to authority</i>	<i>Political</i>	Weak challenge
	<i>Social</i>	Significant challenge
<i>Characteristics of the accountability strategy</i>	<i>Who?</i>	Collective political accountability, effective after individualisation
	<i>To whom?</i>	Social orientation, limited political orientation
	<i>For what?</i>	Siting
	<i>With what arguments?</i>	Situational argumentation with one ideological component
	<i>How?</i>	Direct, formal, and informal
	<i>When?</i>	Reactive
<i>Rise to the challenge to authority</i>	<i>Political</i>	Moderate improvement
	<i>Social</i>	Moderate improvement
<i>Relevance of the rendering of account</i>		Limited

10

Ghent: A convincing story

The neighbourhood residents are well-intentioned Belgians, well-intentioned Flemish, who when you provide sufficient motivation [will understand the decision].

(Informant 66, senior administrator)

On 3 September 2010, the Board of Mayor and Aldermen of the Flemish city of Ghent decided to buy a property in Nieuwland in the Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham neighbourhood. It was designated to house a night shelter for the city's homeless as part of a citywide initiative to combat the shortage of human service facilities and to serve as a replacement for two temporary facilities elsewhere in Ghent. On the day of the decision, the board issued a press release to give publicity to the intended establishment of the night shelter. Soon thereafter neighbourhood residents living in the direct vicinity of Nieuwland 12-14 received an invitation for a public meeting about the intended facility (Municipality of Ghent, 2010c).

When the meeting took place on the evening of the 5th of October 2010, the attending aldermen, Guy Reynebeau and Geert Versnick, and their senior administrators were caught by surprise: contrary to what they had expected, they encountered strong opposition against their decision, to an extent they had barely witnessed before. For the city of Ghent, which was generally characterised by a relatively harmonious relationship between the local government and neighbourhood residents, the level of opposition was unusual (Informant 70, senior administrator). Especially among the members of the local Turkish community there was active resistance. In interviews both neighbourhood residents and government representatives report that they were shocked by the unexpected intensity of the conflict:

I was shocked by it. (...) The aldermen also were somewhat [shocked]. The aldermen had expected a reaction, but it was quite a racist attitude of the migrant population towards the homeless. (...) It has also been said at the time and place. It has also been repeated by several aldermen that they were a little taken aback by the reaction of these people.

(Informant 66, senior administrator)

It was first some general information that they gave. That was quite good. And then people could ask questions themselves, and then it went quite wrong. (...)

Yes, then that went wrong, because they actually started to snap at the people, to give it a name. That really was not applaudable.

(Informant 49, neighbourhood resident)

However, that evening with the help of a handful of well-disposed neighbourhood residents, aldermen Versnick and Reynebeau and the Ghent Centre for General Social Work – Artevelde (Dutch acronym: CAW) managed to take the sting out of the confrontation by explaining the location decision and adequately informing neighbourhood residents about the clientele's characteristics and measures that would be taken to prevent any disturbances from occurring. In the weeks that followed, the opposition in the Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham neighbourhood slowly but surely died down. By the time the final interviews were conducted for the current study (spring 2012) the night shelter had lost almost all saliency for neighbourhood residents: it was no longer an issue. On 10 January 2012, a public meeting about the facility lasted no longer than 15 minutes and was attended by only a handful of neighbourhood residents. This was not usual since the establishment of human service facilities is one of the more controversial decisions, also in a Flemish context (Informant 67, care agency manager): "The problem you address, the siting issues regarding what we call 'poverty/roof and homeless people' [are] the most sensitive in the social context." Nevertheless, by 2011 accountees' attitudes towards the location decision were fairly positive, interviews showed, especially when compared to the other cases included in the current study. The current chapter provides a case study report for the establishment of the night shelter and analyses what effect the rendering of account had on the authority of the executives involved.

10.1 A night shelter in Nieuwland: a short history

The harsh Belgian winter of 2009 made it obvious that there was a shortage of human service facilities in a number of Belgian cities. Several local governments were forced to take emergency measures in order to provide shelter for their populations of homeless people. In Brussels the situation led to national public indignation, but other cities experienced similar problems. One of these cities was Ghent, where the existing night shelter could not handle the demand. It could only house 24 people, which was nowhere near sufficient (Municipality of Ghent, 2009c; Dams, 2009; "Winteropvang voor daklozen in verwarmde loods", 2009). Moreover, the existing night shelter was located at a temporary location. On 17 March 2008 the night shelter moved from *Nieuw Gent* to Gasmeterlaan (Municipality of Ghent, 2008, p. 10), but the building in Gasmeterlaan was part of an urban regeneration programme, which meant that it had

to be demolished in the near future. For that reason the municipal Facility Management department had already started a search for a new location in the spring of 2009 (Municipality of Ghent, 2010h; see also Municipality of Ghent, 2009c). This, however, had proved a difficult task.

What made the search especially difficult was the size of the intended facility. The plan was not only to replace the Gasmeterlaan facility, but also to combine the existing facility with the night shelter for long term use that had opened in Vlaamse Kaai in March 2010, but also had to be relocated. The latter facility, which was a continuation of an emergency winter shelter (Municipality of Ghent, 2010g), was also located at a temporary location and therefore had to be relocated, too (Municipality of Ghent, 2009b).

The fact that the combined facility required a minimum of 40 rooms was a particularly troublesome criterion because it meant that a fairly large building was required, of which not many were available in the city of Ghent. Together with functional and spatial planning criteria, size formed one of the main bottlenecks for finding a suitable location (see Municipality of Ghent, 2010h). Early on in the search for a location an otherwise suitable building came up that could fit a slightly smaller number of rooms than the required 40. This option was turned down by the responsible alderman's cabinet for being too small (Informant 66). Whereas smaller units were considered appropriate for temporary solutions (Municipality of Ghent, 2009a, 2009b), a permanent split-up in different buildings lacked the necessary political support, purely for financial reasons (Informant 67). The search yielded several alternative locations. These, however, would not become available within the time frame in which the board wanted to realise the night shelter.

During the search for suitable buildings, the municipal Facility Management department made extensive enquiries with the help of other municipal departments, government agencies, real estate agents, and a number of semi-public and private organisations. Ghent's inhabitants were not asked to propose locations. Local bureau-

Table 22. Timeline Ghent

Date	Event
Spring 2009	Start of search for locations
03 September 2010	Location decision by the municipal board
21 September 2010	Positive council committee advice on purchase
27 September 2010	Municipal Council approval on purchase
05 October 2010	Public meeting
29 November 2010	<i>Wijkdebat</i>
Spring 2011	Management board meetings
10 January 2012	Public meeting

crats believed that as regards facilities such as these, consulting with neighbourhood residents in fact was an odd thing to do since it was seen to generate (unnecessary) public opposition and to be ineffective in terms of finding socially and politically feasible locations (Informants 32, 66, and 70). “As you have already understood, we did not do prior consultations with the neighbourhood residents, for the simple reason that we then would not find a location. Everyone has his own opinion” (Informant 32, senior administrator). Besides, the municipal administration did not want to give publicity to the search for locations, so for this reason it took place behind closed doors (Informants 32 & 66).

Eventually, the search for a suitable building took over seventeen months. In total more than 20 properties were investigated by the Facility Management department (Municipality of Ghent, 2010h, 2010d). Most buildings were either not suitable for technical reasons, or were simply not available. The availability of suitable buildings, thus, was rather low.

There were some alternative locations (Informant 80, councillor), but very few met all technical criteria and were available on time. There was little to choose from. Therefore, there was also little political debate on the location, but political support from the council for concrete locations was, nevertheless, taken into account in the decision-making. This claim is corroborated by the fact that, within the governing coalition, councillors were consulted on the location decision.

NK: Has the location for the night shelter been discussed with the members of your party group?

I: Yes. That has been very democratically discussed. It is not the case that it was decided on by the board and that we had to say yes. It has been addressed reasonably many times.

(Informant 80, councillor)

In the end, a suitable and politically feasible building was found when the municipal administration came into contact with representatives of the IH-Vak Camii mosque located in Nieuwland 12-14, in the Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham neighbourhood in the northern part of Ghent, who were willing to sell the building to the local government.

On 3 September 2010, the municipal board, under the primary responsibility of alderman Tom Balthazar, decided to buy the property in Nieuwland, and issued a press release that same day. On 4 September 2010, the municipal administration distributed an invitation in the Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham neighbourhood for a public meeting about the facility, which would take place one month later.

There was, however, one important condition: the Municipal Council still had to approve the purchase. The decision was thus publicly announced before it was formally

approved by the council. The municipal administration wanted neighbourhood residents to know about the siting of the night shelter first, before ‘formally’ informing the Municipal Council. It also wanted to communicate with neighbourhood residents directly, to avoid the risk of them finding out about the night shelter through the media (Informant 70). At the same time, the municipal administration recognised the risk that was embedded in the timing:

At the time, the council had not yet approved the decision. The board approves the principle decision, but the council has to do so formally. So we had to wait for the formal approval of the council. Something can always still go wrong. It can be that a discussion ensues in the council, or that for instance, there is an administrative problem. It can also be the case that soil pollution is detected at the location, and then of course it also cannot proceed.

(Informant 32, senior administrator)

The purchase passed through the Municipal Council without a hitch, though. First, the council committee on Welfare was informed about the location decision, in response to inquiries by Public Social Welfare Centre (Dutch acronym: OCMW)-councillor Paul Pataer in the 15 September 2010 Welfare Council Committee meeting. Alderman Reynebeau, who in the meantime had replaced Balthazar as the alderman responsible for Social Affairs, informed the committee that a new location had been found in Nieuwland (Municipality of Ghent, 2010a). No discussions ensued with regard to the location decision. Then, on 21 September 2010, the council committee responsible for facility management advised positively on the purchase, after which the council granted its approval on 27 September 2010. Again, no discussion ensued, neither in the council committee meeting nor in the council meeting (see Municipality of Ghent, 2010f, 2010k), notwithstanding the fact that some individual councillors did not support the location decision (Informant 80, councillor). The purchase passed on the nod.

Basically it passed through the Municipal Council without a hitch. Notwithstanding their party political differences, all political parties were fine with it. I am actually surprised that nobody voted against so as to create a distinct profile for himself. But, all political parties perceived it as a good decision, even at that particular location. I am surprised that no political games were played as regards the issue. The council committee also granted its approval. Nobody objected to it.

(Informant 32, senior administrator)

The council's approval paved the way for the 5 October 2010 public meeting. During the meeting, alderman Reynebeau and alderman Versnick, president of the OCMW, informed neighbourhood residents about the decision, in cooperation with Katrien Haud'Huyze from the municipal Facility Management department and Patrick Seys from the CAW, that is, the care agency that initiated the establishment of the facility at the request of and in cooperation with the municipal government.

The well-attended meeting was the scene of unexpected and uncommon protest from neighbourhood residents, especially among the members of Ghent's Turkish community. Compared to other public meetings the attendance of the latter was relatively high (with an estimated attendance of 70 to 80) and they held strong opinions against the night shelter. The arguments that were voiced against the location decision related mostly to the already vulnerable state of the Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham neighbourhood (see Appendix F) and the presence of a children's day care centre directly opposite the intended facility (see, e.g., "Buurt heeft vragen bij inplanting nachtopvang", 2010). Furthermore, neighbourhood residents feared the facility's clients and expected a growing shortage of parking spaces.

A considerable number of the attendees decidedly opposed the establishment of the night shelter, and did their utmost to get local government to undo the decision, although a similar number of people attended the meeting to attain substantive information about the facility and its clients. The dividing line between the two groups, according to Informants, to a large extent coincided with the ethnic-cultural background of the attendees:

There were many people there, also very many migrants, which is something you do not always see at neighbourhood meetings, but in this case they were there, and were actually most vehemently against the decision, as far as I could see. The fact is that there were quite a lot of them, and in my experience that is not usual, and that they actually responded very negatively. I would almost think that they were the most vehement and negative.

(Informant 69; also Informants 32, 49, 59, and 68, senior administrator and neighbourhood residents of different ethnic backgrounds)

I did not expect such a riot between the indigenous and the immigrant population.

(Informant 66, senior administrator)

The heated atmosphere made it hard for local government representatives to get their message across because there was no room for a proper conversation:

It was intense until the end. (...) [Opposition] was of course mainly aimed at the political-executives, (...) especially from the migrant community. (...) [There were a number of Belgian families] who then asked questions on content. (...) At any rate it was bizarre. It was also a strange dialogue: on the one side you had the ones who shouted loudest and so on, and said: "That cannot be. Government is acting irresponsibly.", and then you had a small group of people who mainly asked questions on content. Then you did not get a dialogue. (...) That was a strange experience for me too.

(Informant 67, care agency manager)

This situation was aggravated by a language barrier between some of the members of the Turkish community and the local government representatives, which inhibited effective communication between the two (Informants 32 & 67).

It was a very interesting evening. There were of course questions, but these could be critically assessed. We did convince one group of neighbourhood residents. There is also a group which we were less able to convince, I think. Those did not understand it well and there was a communication problem. (...) It was also a group that did not understand the language so well, migrants. That is also why we have not been able to convince them well.

(Informants 32, senior administrator)

This fact was recognised by the aldermen involved. Yet, they held that since they represented a Flemish government of which the official language was Dutch, they would communicate in Dutch only. Furthermore, they were not willing to hire translators for the Turkish attendees because they held that such a service would create an undesirable inequality for other non-native attendees (personal communication). This approach was different from, for example, the approach in the Rotterdam case (see Chapter 5), where translators were hired to enable effective communication with ethnic minorities. The difference may be explained by the sensitivity of the language issue in Belgium; the language conflict has a strong political nature and prevented Flemish local government from communicating in other languages (Witte & Van Velthoven, 2010; Celis & Van Daele, 2011).

Some Informants suggested that the aldermen's reaction to the unexpected opposition was rather harsh in the sense that they quickly put protesters in their place and that they thereby effectively silenced those who could not easily voice their objections against the establishment of the night shelter (Informants 49, neighbourhood resident, and 66, senior administrator). Yet others held that the aldermen responded to neighbourhood residents' sometimes rude remarks sternly, but with dignity (e.g.,

Informant 80, councillor). In the short term, that is, during the meeting the firm, persistent, and directive attitude of the aldermen, Versnick in particular, fuelled social opposition (Informant 66, senior administrator).

The long term effect of the aldermen's approach was that some neighbourhood residents were strengthened in their conviction that their opposition would be to no avail.

I do find it strange that they did not notify us in advance, but only did so when it was already too late. They informed us only when it had already been decided. (...) Why have they not first asked us neighbourhood residents whether we agreed to that? They asked us after they had already decided. That is how it happened. They had decided everything: it would be established, and yet they purportedly asked us to give our comments. (...) They have again given us 'a rag', we say here in Flanders: you have nothing to say, the government decides. We as small citizens probably have nothing to say to that.

(Informant 68, neighbourhood resident)

10.2 Overcoming opposition

There is, however, more involved than simply 'giving up' on trying to change the aldermen's minds. What was particularly important for the opposers was that the night shelter would not endanger the public safety in Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham. Although the aldermen were unable to convince all neighbourhood residents of the reasonableness of the location decision, interviews indicated that they were able to convince them to such an extent that the municipal government, in cooperation with the police and the CAW, would take adequate measures that would ensure the minimising of possible detrimental effects on the neighbourhood. Especially, CAW manager Seys' contribution to the 5 October 2010 public meeting was widely appreciated. As was the setting up of some sort of management board in which neighbourhood residents could discuss the implementation of the facility in the neighbourhood with the municipal administration. This included subjects such as the external appearance of building and public safety regulations.

In the Ghent case the relevance of the management board for channelling social opposition, however, seems to have been less than in some of the other cases in this study. In Rotterdam and 's-Hertogenbosch, for example, citizens wanted to be involved in the decision-making about the implementation. By contrast, neighbourhood residents very much appreciated the extent to which the municipal administration and the CAW had already thought through many of the management issues beforehand

when they announced the location decision, such as opening hours of the facility. The working of the night shelter was spelled out in great detail on 5 October 2011 already. Whereas such details of the exploitation of human service facilities in the Netherlands were often subject of extensive deliberation between care agencies, local governments, the police, and neighbourhood residents, Ghent's neighbourhood residents seemed rather satisfied with the predetermined arrangements. The clarity that was offered so early on seems to have taken away a considerable amount of neighbourhood residents' uncertainty and anxieties (e.g., Informants 59 & 68). Ghent's municipal board additionally benefitted from a high level of trust and credibility among neighbourhood residents as was expressed by the majority of Informants. Even opposers had high trust in local government's ability to ensure public safety in relation to the night shelter.

Nevertheless, the failure to convince members of the Turkish community in particular of the reasonableness of the decisions meant that among them, opposition against the location decision remained high.

However, after the 5 October 2010 meeting there was little active resistance against the establishment of the night shelter, although a handful of neighbourhood residents sent letters to the municipal government to express their objections afterwards. It seems that opposers had quickly reached a state of acquiescence. Although they did not agree with the decision, they were convinced that the location decision had been made definitively, and that resistance against it would not have any effect. They resigned themselves to the fact that the night shelter would eventually be established in what they perceived as a bad location, which led to a state of acquiescence. "I thought: 'It will not matter much anyway. Everything has already been decided, but in order to hear our voice nonetheless, they have just asked us to come.' So it was a little ambiguous" (Informant 68, neighbourhood resident).

In fact, it was one of the aldermen's goals that evening to get across the message that the location decision had been made definitively (Informants 32 & 66, senior administrators). The municipal administration wanted to get a clear and indisputable message across, saying that the night shelter would be established in Nieuwland in any case. There was to be no citizen participation in the location decision-making process and the location decision would not be subject to revision. The aldermen's style of communication that evening, which many perceived as being "authoritarian" (e.g., Informant 59, also Informants 49 & 66), sustained the directive nature of the decision.

10.3 Challenge to authority

The fact that neighbourhood residents had no say in the location decision-making was not very much appreciated by neighbourhood residents living in the vicinity of the

night shelter's intended location. They would have liked to have been involved in the location decision-making process (e.g., Informants 59 & 68, neighbourhood residents). Yet, on the whole, neighbourhood residents' attitude towards the location decision, with the exception of that of a substantial group of persistent opposers, seemed rather positive. Without necessarily agreeing to the location decision as such, Ghent's neighbourhood residents, more so than any of the other neighbourhood residents that were interviewed for the current study, believed that the location decision was reasonable. Some even considered the location to be a good one (e.g., Informant 59), others perceived the location decision as defensible, understandable, or "to be respected" (e.g., Informant 68).

This attitude towards the location decision was put into words most effectively by one Informant, who portrayed a highly reflective attitude:

I did think it was a bad location. Maybe that is a bit egoistic. (...) It remains subjective. It is my opinion. But from another perspective, if I look at it through other people's eyes, then I have nothing against it. (...) I understand: we also do not always have a say. If the government always had to ask our opinion, then we would not get anywhere, because we will always say 'no'.

(Informant 68, neighbourhood resident)

At the same time many neighbourhood residents held strong evaluative opinions about the conduct of the aldermen involved and their decision. They did not simply and unreflectively accept a decision made 'out of power', but considered its legitimacy by evaluating the reasonableness of the decision-making and of the resulting location.

In these evaluations the 'Why here?' question played a prominent role and was what was on the minds of all Ghent's neighbourhood resident Informants. On the whole, neighbourhood residents understood and respected the location decision, although they did not necessarily agree with it.

What is especially interesting for the current study is that this positive evaluation of the reasonableness of the location decision was generally based on the evaluation of the account provided by the aldermen, rather than on an evaluation of suitability of the location as such. More so than in the other cases included in this study, neighbourhood residents referred to the arguments that the aldermen provided (the *uitleg*). Ghent's neighbourhood residents often made a direct link between their relatively positive attitude towards the decision and the information and argumentation provided by the aldermen during the 5 October 2011 meeting, and thereafter. It was the rendering of account that convinced them of the reasonableness of the location decision, rather than anything else (Informants 49, 53, 59, and 69, neighbourhood resi-

dents). The alderman had effectively explained why the Nieuwland location decision was made as it was made.

Councillors too referred to the considerations of the aldermen when they evaluated the reasonableness of the location decision. Consider: “But then when I consider everything, the decision, and I see the choice of the aldermen and look at the argumentation, yes, then I can agree” (Informant 80, councillor).

In the experience of most actors involved, the aldermen managed to show the reasonableness of the location decision by explaining the considerations that motivated the location decision (e.g., Informants 32, 59, 69, and 80). Neighbourhood residents reported that at first they were very sceptical about the Nieuwland location, but that the aldermen, together with the local bureaucrats and the CAW, convinced them of the reasonableness of the location decision. One neighbourhood resident even suggested that the local administration could not have done a better job in the way it organised the public meeting and explained its location decision, even though his attitude towards the location decision as such was not positive.

It seems that the aldermen succeeded in convincing at least a pivotal group of neighbourhood residents of the reasonableness of the location decision, as well as the large majority of the Municipal Council. There was a group of neighbourhood residents, in particular within the Turkish community, that still disputed the reasonableness of the decision (Informants 32, 59, 68, and 80), but in general their specific authority as regards the location decision was largely regained.

The next section analyses the aldermen’s accountability strategy in relation to neighbourhood residents’ and other accountees’ attitudes towards the local executives and establishes to what extent it has contributed to regaining authority and why.

10.4 Ghent’s local executives’ accountability strategies

This section provides an overview of the accountability strategies developed by political-executive leaders in Ghent. To structure the analysis, the model of accountability from Chapter 3 is used, which consists of the six dimensions ‘Who?’, ‘To whom?’, ‘For what?’, ‘With what arguments?’, ‘How?’, and ‘When?’.

I: Who rendered account?

Shortly after the location decision for the Nieuwland night shelter was made, Balthazar, the then responsible alderman for public welfare handed over his responsibilities in this policy field to Reynebeau. On 6 September 2010, the latter was sworn in as alderman to replace Karin Temmerman, who became a member of the Federal Parliament (Municipality of Ghent, 2010b, 2010e). As the new alderman, Reynebeau became the

main accountee for the location decision. But, he shared this role with alderman and OCMW president Versnick and Balthazar, the alderman for spatial planning. The first two represented the municipal executive in the 5 October public meeting.

Their presence followed from the guiding principle within the Ghent municipal administration that those politically responsible for a decision should also be the ones that explain and justify the decision to accountees. The aldermen also deliberately framed the location decision as a public health issue rather than as an issue of public safety, which was underlined by the presence of the alderman for Welfare and the OCMW alderman.

The aldermen also intentionally constituted the location decision as a collective decision of the board. They acted as a team of accountors, rather than as individual aldermen. Also in the communication with the Municipal Council, the three aldermen made it clear that it was not an *“eenmansbeslissing”*, a decision made by one man, but that the complete board was involved (Informant 80, councillor). The accountability strategy, thus, hinged on collective accountability. This was emphasised by the fact that mayor Termont played an important role in the informal rendering of account. In the months following the 5 October 2010 public meeting, several citizens contacted Termont in relation to the night shelter in the context of other meetings. Similarly, the mayor was the formal sender of a letter that once again explained the board's considerations (see Termont, 2011b). The role of these contacts was important as an informal accountability mechanism. Termont shared accountability for the location decision with the other executives.

Both of these elements of the accountability strategy, sharing accountability between aldermen and being accountable in the role of being responsible for healthcare, depoliticised the location decision, which in turn increased the effectiveness of the accountability strategy.

At the same time the political-executives strongly emphasised their political responsibility and accountability for the location decision. The board positioned itself as the main accountee and screened off other actors that were involved in the location decision-making, such as local bureaucrats, care agencies, and councillors. This concentration of accountability was a prime aspect of the communication strategy, in which there was a strict division of tasks between the aldermen, local bureaucrats, and the CAW. The latter two strictly limited themselves to providing factual information about, respectively, the location decision-making process, the nature of the night shelter, and its clients. A clear distinction was made between three types of information. Senior administrators explained *how* the location decision-making process had evolved in an informative sense, the aldermen took responsibility for explaining *why* they had opted of the Nieuwland location in a normative sense, and the CAW experts explained *what* a night shelter was and how it operated.

During the 5 October 2010 public meeting, the department of Facility Management reported on the steps that had been taken in the location decision in the technical sense. When neighbourhood residents subsequently questioned the appropriateness of the location decision, alderman Versnick and later alderman Reynebeau took over because the location decision was perceived as being a political decision. Senior administrators were hesitant to answer neighbourhood residents' evaluative questions (Informant 66) and fell back on the informal yet rigid division of tasks between the political actors and the administrative staff: it was not the administrators' task to defend political decisions. In the relationship between the aldermen and the CAW, a similar division of tasks was upheld. This provided the CAW the opportunity to affirm its independency of the local government when it came to the location decision (Informant 67). It were, thus, the aldermen that undertook the majority of the accountability activities.

II: To whom did local political-executive leaders render account?

The firm support of the Municipal Council for the location in Nieuwland made it unnecessary for the board to render account for the location decision to the council *ex post*, especially since the council did not hold the board to account for it afterwards. In the municipal board there was little to no controversy over the location decision as such (Informants 76, 77, 78, 79, and 80, councillors).

This can be explained by the close relations between the council and the board in the Belgian monistic system; the board took the political support for the location decision into account in the decision-making process. Within the coalition there was explicit, informal consultation between the aldermen and councillors about the location decision (Informant 80, councillor). By contrast, the opposition in their experience was deliberately kept out of the decision-making (Informant 79, councillor). This can be explained by the dominance of the board over the council in Flemish local government (see Verhelst *et al.*, 2010).

A lot more power has come to reside with the board, and less with the members of the council. (...) The council is unfortunately still sometimes seen a bit as a formality, and as something then which comes afterwards. (...) Reasoning from the board's viewpoint: why would they consider involving the council anyway? They can just decide amongst themselves and then confront the council with the consequences.

(Informant 79, councillor)

This is illustrated by the order of communication of the decision: neighbourhood residents were informed before the council granted its approval. Yet, for opposition councillors, the location decision lacked the saliency to become a truly controversial

issue (Informants 78 & 79, councillors). Due to this lack of saliency, the location decision slipped through the scrutiny net (Informant 78). Councillors in their experience also lacked the means to scrutinise all of the board's decisions (e.g., Informants 77 & 78, councillors).

The prior political support for the location decision severely reduced the importance of the accountability relationship between the council and the board during and after the decision-making process. It was not until one of the councillors voiced his dissatisfaction with the location decision during the 5 October 2010 public meeting (Informants 66 & 70), that this accountability relationship manifested itself briefly, with little effect though because none of the councillors decided to put the night shelter on the council's agenda. In their view it lacked saliency.

Alternatively, the main accountability relationship in the night shelter dossier was the direct accountability relationship between the board and neighbourhood residents. Neighbourhood residents expected the aldermen to explain and justify the location decision and, leaving aside the minority of decidedly opposing citizen, it seems that the aldermen have met the former's expectations in doing so. When asked what they thought of the location decision, Informants and even some of the opposers generally answered that they agreed with or at least understood the board's considerations, without necessarily agreeing with the location decision.

But it is the municipality that decides, the government, they are in need of the facility, but I would have wanted the facility to be located outside of the city. Not in the city centre, but just somewhat outside of it. That would be much more agreeable for everyone. That was one of my comments at the meeting. I said: why this location? Do you not have another location, a bit further out? At the harbour, perhaps? Then it does not have to be very far, but a little farther, so that it is not really in the city centre. (...) But in itself I am not against it. (...) You see, it does have to be located somewhere. So really they should sometimes take decisions 'from power' maybe.

(Informant 68, neighbourhood resident)

The location, too, we did not think suitable. (...) Well, what was the criticism to that? First, we already are a disadvantaged neighbourhood, a neighbourhood with problems. (...) And, moreover, the location is directly opposite a child care centre. (...) I did not ask for that. Place it in an adjacent neighbourhood, not in ours! But it always has to go somewhere, right? And I do know that too, that it was a choice with many different viewpoints. They have had to make a choice. It had to be located somewhere. I do understand that, too.

(Informant 53, neighbourhood resident)

Even some of the decidedly opposing neighbourhood residents reported that they respected and understood the board's considerations. Neighbourhood residents had settled for the board's argumentation. Especially for members of the Turkish community, though, the location decision and the justification thereof did not meet the norms they used in evaluating the reasonableness of the location decision, particularly because of the fact that the night shelter was housed in an already disadvantaged and densely populated neighbourhood (see Appendix F).

Overall, though, the board's argumentation meshed with councillors' and neighbourhood residents' value patterns and belief systems. The latter subscribed to the reasonableness of the board's argumentation, which is elaborated in the next section.

Several factors have fostered this process. At least three can be distinguished. First, on many occasions the board held that the Nieuwland location was the only available one (e.g., Termont, 2011b, p. 13). If accepted, such an argumentation needs no further explanation. Second, Ghent's neighbourhood residents, in contrast to the Dutch citizens that were interviewed for the current study, were not particularly inclined to question the board's argumentation or the validity of its claims. The board's credibility appears to have been rather high. Third, Informants' appreciation for the way the board communicated with its citizens and for the way it involved them in decision-making processes other than that of the night shelter was high. Generally, the relationship between neighbourhood residents and the executive board was evaluated very positively by Informants, even by opposers to the night shelter. Especially the way the current administration implemented its 'neighbourhood governance approach' [*gebiedsgerichte werking*] was much appreciated.

This approach, which was introduced in 2003 (see Municipality of Ghent, 2003), included local bureaucrats that each had a special responsibility for one of Ghent's 25 neighbourhoods and that formed a well-known and accessible contact for neighbourhood residents. The 2007-2012 municipal board made no light work of the neighbourhood governance approach and the entire board visited each neighbourhood twice during its term of office for a debate with neighbourhood residents [*wijkdebat*]. The board's continued involvement with Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham was widely appreciated, by advocates of as well as opposers to the Nieuwland location decision. It seems that this has provided the municipal board some welcome leeway in making a directive, controversial location decision.

Last but not least, at the time of the decision-making about the night shelter the neighbourhood was experiencing considerable trouble with illegal immigrants, Eastern-European workers, poverty, squatting, littering, and an alleged shortage of parking spaces (Municipality of Ghent, 2010j; also Informants 49, 53, 59, and 68). These issues reduced the saliency of the night shelter for its inhabitants. It was, for example, expected that the night shelter would be the subject of discussion during the

29 November 2010 *wijkdebat*, but instead the meeting was dominated by other, more important issues (personal observation, see also Termont, 2011b). To put it bluntly: Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham's residents had other things on their minds than opposing to the night shelter. Compared to other issues, the night shelter was unimportant, also because the location decision was perceived as being fairly reasonable.

The result of these combined factors was that neighbourhood residents did not actively hold the municipal board to account for the Nieuwland location decision, which may partly explain why the board's members did not extensively render account to them after the 5 October 2010 public meeting. The meeting itself, however, was the scene of explicit accountability activities.

The rendering of account that took place during the 5 October meeting and thereafter, however, only reached those citizens that were involved in the dossier in some way, that is, those who lived in the vicinity of the Nieuwland location, attended the *wijkdebat*, or contacted the local government individually. Other neighbourhood residents were not rendered account to.

What should also be noted is that not all neighbourhood residents perceived the relationship with the municipal board as one of accountability. Some were less interested in the answers that the municipal board provided than in seizing the opportunity to voice their opposition and to simply get across the message that they would have preferred a different location. Their evaluative questions were not aimed at being able to form an informed and proper judgement on the board's decision, but should rather be perceived as rhetorical questions that illustrated their disagreement with the location decision. Other neighbourhood residents, however, did explicitly perceive their relationship with the municipal board as one of accountability and were (very) disappointed that the board did not always go into their evaluative questions and, at least in their perception, did not provide sufficient answers to these questions (e.g., Informant 49). Yet other neighbourhood residents believed an accountability relationship existed between them and the board and were satisfied with, or even convinced by the board's justification.

To sum up, neighbourhood residents were the main accountees in relation to the Nieuwland night shelter. The accountability relationships between the municipal board on the one hand and the Municipal Council on the other played little to no role in regaining authority.

III: For what did local political-executive leaders render account?

The Ghent 2007-2012 municipal board decided to explicitly render account for the location decision. It was one of the main foci of their communication strategy. The board's members considered the location to be one of the main political aspects of the decision and set out to justify the Nieuwland location to neighbourhood residents, thereby

addressing citizens' enquiries with regard to the considerations that motivated the location decision. Interestingly, the board did not portray the location decision as a choice between different options, but rather as a decision to opt for the only suitable and available option. The board outlined the decision as a choice between housing homeless people in Nieuwland or not doing so at all. Therefore, it mainly rendered account for the act of establishing a night shelter in Nieuwland, rather than for choosing between different locations. In a sense, this fits with the nature of the location decision-making process. "The location we actually encountered by coincidence. Not that many choices preceded the decision" (Informant 32, senior administrator). The location 'decision' can, thus, be considered to be an act rather than a choice.

There is, however, an interesting paradox embedded in the picture that the board painted of the location decision and the location decision-making process. On the one hand, the location decision was considered to be of a non-political nature, allegedly lacking proper alternatives and leaving little room for choice. On the other hand, the aldermen emphasised their political responsibility and accountability for the location decision.

Moreover, when asked what the considerations were that motivated the location decision, those involved in the actual decision-making regularly mentioned arguments that suggested a choice between different locations, or even mentioned concrete alternative locations (Informants 66, 67, 70, and 80). The fair distribution for human service facilities was, for example, voiced as one of the considerations behind the location decision (Informant 32, senior administrator), which is at odds with the suggestion that there was only one real option. Further, the availability of suitable property was substantially reduced by the list of criteria that were set in advance. The application of a number of these criteria, such as the availability of financial means, can be considered as being essentially political (see also Holton *et al.*, 1973; Dear, 1974, p. 48; Rose, 1993, p. 99).

A justification was provided for very few of those criteria, with the exception of the accessibility of the night shelter. In that sense, the municipal board did not fully render account for the normative considerations that motivated the location decision. Yet, the alderman did elaborately render account for the location decision as such. During the public meeting detailed explanations and justification were provided of the board's considerations for making the location decision as it was made (e.g., Municipality of Ghent, 2010d).

In addition, the board, through the municipal administration, explained to neighbourhood residents how it had arrived at the location decision. But, no justification in the sense of rendering of account was provided for this because it was perceived as being a rather non-political, technical procedure. The explanation of the decision-making the board provided was a matter of informing neighbourhood residents rather

than rendering account to them. Only with regard to the alleged lack of citizens' involvement in the decision-making about the location did the municipal board try to justify its approach to neighbourhood residents.

Furthermore, the board explained and justified its human service facility policy in the broader sense by explaining why it believed that it was right to provide a night shelter for Ghent's homeless population. Their arguments were especially directed towards those members of the Turkish community that were very sceptical of the establishment of such human service facilities.

The human service facility policy in general and the location decision, thus, were the main foci of the aldermen's accountability strategy. Overall, they tended to focus on the act of establishing a night shelter in Nieuwland, rather than on an alleged choice between alternative locations.

IV: With what arguments did local political-executive leaders render account?

The main argument that the municipal board used to justify its decision to locate the night shelter in Nieuwland was that it was simply the only suitable location that was available (see Municipality of Ghent, 2010d; Termont, 2011b, p. 13; also Informant 32, senior administrator). This was also what neighbourhood residents recalled:

They just came to say: the night shelter will be established here, as there is no space elsewhere. This is the best place. It could not be otherwise, because of too little space, or due to problems with traffic, I believe. They pretended it was a dialogue with the neighbourhood residents, but really it had already been decided.

(Informant 49, neighbourhood resident)

In this quote the paradox that was discussed in the previous sub-section manifests itself again: the arguments of Nieuwland being the *only* available location and of it being the *best* available location were intertwined, the latter implying a choice the possibility of which the former rules out. And in fact, other locations were available (Informant 80), or might have become available later on. It seems, however, that neighbourhood residents took no offence at this inconsistency. They contented themselves with the argumentation that the board provided, with the exception of those decidedly opposed that is.

The aldermen's main argument for the location decision, thus, was that Nieuwland was the only available location. This is considered to be a situational argument. The main secondary argument was also situational: it was argued that the Nieuwland location, being so close to the city centre, was readably accessible for the facilities' clientele. The reasonableness of this argument was acknowledged by all Informants.

The argument was responsive to the accountees' norm that a facility must be accessible for its clientele.

Overall, attendees described the 5 October 2010 public meeting as well-organised and referred to the information and argumentation that was provided as 'good'.

The information we received was quite good really. (...) The explanation was also very good. "Look: we have all these properties, so many of them, we have looked at them, we have measured them, we have inspected them with various municipal departments, and this was the most obvious solution." So then I said: "Yes, ok, that is alright." (...) I found the information to the point, realistic, and good.

(Informant 69, also 49 & 59, neighbourhood residents)

The justification provided by the aldermen contributed to convincing neighbourhood residents, all of whom were sceptical about the reasonableness of the location decision initially. This perception was shared by members of the municipal administration evaluating the performance of the aldermen:

The aldermen were sufficiently prepared. (...) I think that they have clearly explained to the people that this was the best choice, given the preconditions and the limited nuisance (...) And that it is a clear choice; that no other alternatives would be examined. They have, so I believe, motivated the decision in more than sufficient detail. (...) There were a number of people who kept asking questions, and that is when alderman Versnick said: the decision has been made. (...) It was not immediately received positively, but I think that understanding has been created, and that was also the intention, creating understanding and acceptance.

(Informant 66, senior administrator, also Informant 32)

This holds for both the location decision as such as well as for the more general social relief policy, where the aldermen justified the decision to establish a night shelter in Nieuwland by referring to homeless people's rights for adequate care.

This enabled the aldermen to avoid heated discussions about alternative locations. "We did not think it was appropriate to speak about other locations. Because then people will redo our exercise substantively, while they do not have all the required knowledge. Such practices should be avoided at all costs" (Informant 66, senior administrator).

To sum up, it seems that Ghent's aldermen have constructed a convincing story of why they opted for a night shelter in Nieuwland. By arguing that it was practically the

only available option, they convinced a pivotal number of neighbourhood residents of the reasonableness of the location decision, which acted as a counterweight to the protest that mainly came from the Turkish community. Eventually, this led to a situation of both understanding, and thus authority, and acquaintance, in which the night shelter lost its saliency for neighbourhood residents.

V: How did local political-executive leaders render account?

The 5 October 2010 public meeting was the main mechanism through which the municipal executive rendered account to neighbourhood residents. The rendering of account for the decision was one of the main goals of the public meeting.

NK: How would you characterise the purpose of that meeting?

I: The purpose was explaining why the location decision was effective. But also to show that we stood behind it, that we were not afraid to explicate our choice and if need be, to defend it to particular people involved.

(Informant 32, senior administrator)

The meeting itself was not considered a standard procedure, but rather as a rare additional accountability mechanism (Informant 80, councillor), the desire for which originated from the potential controversiality of the location decision. In the meeting, the aldermen set out to explicitly explain why they had decided on the Nieuwland location and to justify why they had opted for it.

During the meeting, aldermen Reynebeau and Versnick explained and justified the location decision with the help of technical, informative support from the department of Facility Management and the CAW. The majority of the accountability activities of the municipal executives were concentrated in this one meeting.

What was interesting to see was that almost all Informants, neighbourhood residents as well as the representatives from the local government, mentioned the informal reception that took place after the meeting as an important moment in the night shelter dossier (e.g., Informants 59, 66, and 68). During the reception, neighbourhood residents had the opportunity to discuss the issue with the political as well as administrative actors involved. The reception gave neighbourhood residents the opportunity to ask questions to the aldermen directly. In their perception, such contacts were important parts of the accountability relationship between them and the municipal board. The opportunity to informally discuss the issue was very much appreciated by neighbourhood residents, and the importance thereof should not be underestimated. A similar reception took place after the 29 November 2010 *wijkdebat* (see Termont, 2011a), which was of considerable importance, too (e.g., Informants 53 & 59, neighbourhood residents).

The rendering of account for the location decision, or related aspects, also took place through slightly more formal mechanisms such as meetings between neighbourhood residents and the board's representatives and the exchange of letters. It also took place in informal meetings between neighbourhood residents, or rather neighbourhood associations, and mayor Termont. The availability of such direct accountability mechanisms and the close relationship between the municipal board and its citizens was widely appreciated.

The 29 November 2010 *wijkdebat* should also be mentioned. Although the night shelter itself was not discussed during the meeting, the board rendered account for the Nieuwland location decision in the context of it. In preparation for the *wijkdebat*, the municipal administration invited neighbourhood residents to send in questions for the board and collected 'notes of warning' in relation to the condition of the Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham neighbourhood through reply cards and interviews. Citizens' worries about the night shelter were among the latter. A number of citizens asked why the board opted for such a disadvantaged neighbourhood and whether an alternative location could be considered for the night shelter in or outside the neighbourhood (Municipality of Ghent, 2010i). These questions were not discussed during the debate itself, but the board answered them afterwards in a written document that was distributed to the attendees (Termont, 2011b, p. 13).

VI: When did local political-executive leaders render account?

Compared to the other cases in the current study, the fact that the municipal board made public its decision to buy the property in Nieuwland with the intention to house a night shelter at that location before the Municipal Council approved the decision was unusual. More often than not, the other municipal executives made sure they had the formal backing of the council before they made the location decision public. There was a substantial risk embedded in the Ghent board's communication strategy, at least formally. *De facto* this risk, however, was rather low because the board ensured itself of the political support from the council in advance by consulting the coalition members in the Municipal Council first. This meant that less pressure rested on the accountability relationship between the council and the board with regard to the location decision. The dominance of the board over the council and the limited resources of councillors to some extent rendered the accountability mechanism toothless. At the same time the issue lacked saliency because of the broad support for the night shelter initiative in the council.

With regard to the timing of the accountability activities in the accountability relationship between the municipal board and neighbourhood residents, what is striking is the fact that there is a month between the public announcement of the night shelter's intended establishment and the public meeting in which the aldermen explained

and justified the location decision. In most other cases included in this study, the public announcement of the location decision and the rendering of account for it were closely coupled.

In its communication to these neighbourhood residents, the municipal board chose to explicitly render account for the location decision in anticipation of neighbourhood residents' evaluative questions with regard to it. They adopted a proactive approach by making enquiries into anticipated responses of neighbourhood residents, through the neighbourhood's community centre and the *integratiedienst*. The proactive explanation and justification of the location decision was one of the prime aspects of the communication strategy the aldermen adopted; they had developed a well-prepared account of how they arrived at the location decision and why they opted for that particular location in advance. This helped them in convincing a substantial number of neighbourhood residents of the reasonableness of the location decision quite early on in the process.

10.5 Analysis and conclusions

When the municipal board of Ghent announced its decision to buy a property in Nieuwland, situated in the Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham area, it initially encountered substantial opposition throughout the neighbourhood. Neighbourhood residents, especially those in the Turkish community, strongly disagreed with the location decision, amongst others because the Nieuwland location was situated in an already disadvantaged area and the property was located directly opposite a children's day care centre. Although the opposition was not as intense as in some of the other cases included in this study, it was substantial at first and caught the executives by surprise. However, over the course of approximately half a year the opposition slowly died down. Moreover, the executives involved managed to regain their authority in relation to neighbourhood residents and maintain authority in relation to the council, which from the outset did not challenge the reasonableness of the location decision. To the extent that authority was challenged by neighbourhood residents, the executives regained a considerable amount of authority by showing the reasonableness of their considerations.

One factor that contributed to the diminishing of social opposition seems to be that the municipal board successfully communicated the message that public protest would be to no avail because the definitive location decision had been made. As a consequence of the location decision-making procedure that was opted for and their directive style of communication, the aldermen overpowered the public protest. It could do so because it was solidly supported by the Municipal Council in its decision. The decided opposers realised that their protest would have little effect and therefore

did not even utilise formal objection and appeal procedures to their full potential (the use thereof was rather rare in Ghent anyway - Informant 70, senior administrator).

One of the main explanatory factors, though, seems to be that the aldermen regained authority through effectively rendering account for the location decisions. They had proactively constructed an explanation of why the location decision was made as it was that convinced a pivotal group of initially sceptical neighbourhood residents of the reasonableness of the location decision. The argumentation that the Nieuwland location was the only or the best one available, given the requirements that had to be met by the property and its location, was generally accepted by neighbourhood residents. Not all neighbourhood residents have come to accept the location decision; many still have a preference for other locations. But, overall, the location decision was perceived as being a reasonable one.

In rendering account for the location, the aldermen benefitted from a high level of trust among neighbourhood residents, high credibility, and a good relationship between neighbourhood residents and the local government. The effects of the *gebiedsgerichte werking* have earned the municipal board some welcome leeway (see also Van den Bos *et al.*, 1998). The continued involvement of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen and its *verantwoordingsbereidheid* was widely appreciated.

The accountability strategy through which the aldermen managed to create the necessary understanding for the location decision among neighbourhood residents was particularly effective because it set out to explicitly render account for the location decision, thereby meeting neighbourhood residents' expectations to do so. The aldermen proactively explained and justified the location decision with what was generally perceived as sound argumentation. The fact that they effectively justified the act to establish a night shelter in Nieuwland rather than present a choice between alternative locations meant that heated debate about locations could be avoided. The non-political justification of the decision, for which the aldermen at the same time took full political responsibility, took the sting out of the confrontation; the issue was effectively depoliticised. The aldermen's ability to do so was strengthened by the use of direct and informal accountability mechanisms; the rendering of account took place in informal settings upon which Ghent's neighbourhood residents placed high value. In addition, the effectiveness of the accountability benefitted from the sharing of accountability between aldermen, whilst screening off other actors from having to render account.

On the other hand, the effectiveness of the accountability strategy to some extent suffered from communication problems between the municipal board and members from the Turkish community and the authoritarian attitude of the aldermen. These factors inhibited a proper dialogue, which meant that some neighbourhood residents had limited opportunity to discuss their arguments with the aldermen and to form a

proper judgement on the board's considerations. After the conflict, local government again lost contact with this group of citizens and the latter's attitude towards local government became more negative, as did their attitude towards the aldermen and the night shelter.

Overall, though, it was generally held by neighbourhood residents that the aldermen provided good reasons for their decision to locate a night shelter in Nieuwland, or at least reasons that were good enough. Through the rendering of account, amongst other things, the aldermen involved have thus responded adequately to the limited challenge to their authority that the public protest against the Nieuwland location decision implied.

Table 23. Findings for Ghent

Relevant case characteristics	Sub-categories	Findings
<i>Initial challenge to authority</i>	<i>Political</i>	No challenge
	<i>Social</i>	Weak – significant challenge
<i>Characteristics of the accountability strategy</i>	<i>Who?</i>	Collective political accountability
	<i>To whom?</i>	Social orientation
	<i>For what?</i>	Siting
	<i>With what arguments?</i>	Situational argumentation
	<i>How?</i>	Direct and informal
	<i>When?</i>	Proactive
<i>Rise to the challenge to authority</i>	<i>Political</i>	N/A
	<i>Social</i>	Moderate improvement, but diverse
<i>Relevance of the rendering of account</i>		High

11

The effects of accountability strategies: a comparative analysis

When deciding on where to locate human service facilities local political-executives are inherently confronted with opposition and sometimes even outright resistance from neighbourhood residents. Citizens express their disapproval in a variety of ways. The case studies that are included in the current study and described in the previous chapters contain legal (e.g., filing objections and appeals), political (e.g., contacting councillors) as well as social (e.g., organising a protest march) manifestations thereof. Public protest usually took on relatively innocent forms, but regularly degenerated into improper or even illegal behaviour, such as setting fire to or flooding intended facilities.

The drivers and dynamics of such public protest, and support, have received considerable attention from public administration scholars and political scientists, especially in the 1980s-1990s (e.g., Dear, 1992; Vittes *et al.*, 1993; Hunter & Leyden, 1995; Takahasi & Dear, 1997). Such studies have generated heated debate about what citizens' attitudes towards noxious facilities are, and about the question whether the often-used NIMBY label fosters or inhibits understanding of this (e.g., Burningham, 2000; Wolsink, 2006; Van der Horst, 2007).

In the case of political-executive leaders, what they at least perceive as NIMBY phenomena continue to pose great challenges on a day-to-day basis. Not only does public protest delay or postpone the establishment of necessary public facilities, in these processes the authority of the decision-makers is often challenged as well. The latter hampers mayors and aldermen's abilities to heed calls for directive leadership and poses a risk to the continuity of local governance and local policies.

Executives' experiences with social opposition against controversial decisions have given rise to experiments with different kinds of decision-making processes albeit with mixed results (see Schively, 2007). At least in the cases that are included in this study, politicians, local executives, and care agencies have concluded that citizens' involvement in controversial location decision-making processes is too often counter-productive and that decision-making of a more directive nature is the course to follow. With the partial exception of 's-Hertogenbosch (round 3), a directive Decide-Announce-Defend approach was adopted in all cases under study. Local political-executives thereby showed directive leadership, in the sense of decisive and non-participative decision-making. Realising human service facilities would otherwise have been virtu-

ally impossible, the executives held. At the same time they recognised that regaining authority for such directive decisions was particularly difficult.

Prior to this study, the role of these local political-executive leaders' conduct in such decision-making processes and whether they can make a difference had not yet been systematically reviewed (see also Esaïasson, 2010). The current study set out to contribute to answering such questions, taking the perspective of the local executive leader and focusing on the effect on local political-executives' challenged authority (see Chapter 1).

The analytical focus of this thesis was on accountability, starting from the proposition that political-executive leaders may be able to counter the challenge to their authority that is embedded in the controversiality of their decision through the rendering of account in different ways. It set out to deepen understanding of how accountability mechanisms operate as communicative practices because this is an under-explored question (Brandsma & Schillemans, forthcoming 2013). This study sought deeper understanding of accountability by paying greater attention to the interactive nature of accountability relationships and the communicative structures through which accountability occurs, as advocated by Black (2008, pp. 137-139). If explainability has indeed become the criterion to judge executive conduct (Dijstelbloem & Holtslag, 2010, p. 53), it is important that a better understanding is developed of how accountability mechanisms operate and how their interactive operation influences leaders' vulnerable authority. While not renouncing the core sense of accountability, that is, 'being called to account' (Mulgan, 2000), the current study lay particular emphasis on the role of accountors in shaping accountability relationships because its effects so far are under-explored (see Chapter 1).

The previous chapters have provided case study reports from Rotterdam, The Hague, 's-Hertogenbosch, Antwerp, and Ghent, in which the accountability strategies of individual local political-executives were described, as well as the effects thereof on their authority. The current chapter provides a comparative analysis. The structure of this chapter hinges on the three empirical sub-questions that were posed in Chapter 1: a) how does the authority of local political-executive leaders develop when making directive decisions in a consensus context, b) which accountability strategies do local political-executive leaders employ, and c) what are the effects of executives' accountability strategies on their authority?

11.1 The impact of directive decisions on authority

Table 24 provides a summarising overview of the extent to which the authority of the local executives was challenged in each of the (sub-)cases in terms of accountees'

evaluations of the reasonableness of the location decisions. As was already mentioned in Section 2.2, this is not a measure of support for the decision but a measure of the evaluation of the reasonableness of the decision. The table indicates the extent to which the reasonableness of the location decision was initially challenged by, respectively, political actors (i.e., councillors) and social actors (i.e., neighbourhood residents, resident associations, business owners, etc.). A strong challenge to the authority of the executive meant that the reasonableness of this location decision was strongly questioned in the sense that a pivotal group of accountees held that the location decisions were incomprehensible, that a very bad location had been chosen. Conversely, location decisions of which the reasonableness was positively evaluated by accountees right away were labelled in terms of a weak challenge to the authority of the executives (see Chapter 2). The assessments of the challenges were directly derived from the empirical findings, described in the previous chapters.

The cases showed considerable variety in terms of the extent to which the reasonableness of the location decisions was challenged early on in the process. In Delfshaven the reasonableness of the choice for Kapiteinsbuurt went practically unchallenged because the property had been used before as a human service facility for young autistic people and because neighbourhood residents could identify with the facility's clientele. Conversely, the reasonableness of the Geert Grootestraat and Henri Bayensstraat locations in 's-Hertogenbosch was strongly challenged right away by both political and social actors for being inappropriate locations. The locations that were subsequently chosen by alderman Weterings (Zuiderparkweg and Van Broeckhovenlaan) faced similar levels of social opposition, yet neighbourhood residents and councillors readily believed that the choice for these locations was a more reasonable one. This shows that the level of

Table 24. Overview of challenges to local executives' authority

(Sub-)case	Initial challenge to authority	
	Political	Social
<i>Kapiteinsbuurt (Rotterdam)</i>	No challenge	Weak challenge
<i>Putsebocht (Rotterdam)</i>	Strong challenge	Significant challenge
<i>Sleephellingsstraat (Rotterdam)</i>	Weak challenge	Significant challenge
<i>Willem Ruyslaan (Rotterdam)</i>	Significant challenge	Strong – very strong challenge
<i>Plantagelaan (Rotterdam)</i>	Strong challenge	Strong challenge
<i>Wollefoppenweg (Rotterdam)</i>	Weak challenge	Strong – very strong challenge
<i>Den Haag Onder Dak</i>	Weak challenge	Weak – significant challenge
<i>'s-Hertogenbosch 1 & 2</i>	Strong challenge	Strong – very strong challenge
<i>'s-Hertogenbosch 3</i>	Weak challenge	Significant – strong challenge
<i>Free Clinic (Antwerp)</i>	Weak challenge	Significant challenge
<i>Night shelter (Ghent)</i>	No challenge	Weak - significant challenge

opposition was only a proxy of the extent to which the authority of an executive was challenged (see also Section 2.2.1). The Feijenoord cases in Rotterdam showed accountees' evaluations of the reasonableness of the location decisions of a single executive can vary. The choice for Putsebocht, for example, was strongly challenged by district councillors, whereas the choice for Sleephellingstraat was well received by them. This can be explained by the fact that in the case of the former, executive Oudshoorn deviated from an earlier agreement with the District Council not to opt for locations in the area in which Putsebocht was located, whereas the Sleephellingstraat location met the predetermined criteria and was generally perceived as being a suitable location.

Overall, there was a significant authority risk embedded in controversial location decisions. Interestingly, this was not a question of legitimacy. None of the accountees' interviewed questioned the legitimacy of local political-executives as decision-makers over the location decision. Many citizens had objections with regard to the location decision-making process and would have liked to have had the opportunity to have a say in it. Yet, the legitimacy of political-executives as the final decision-makers was not challenged. Citizens demanded the opportunity to provide input and to be taken seriously, not the right to decide. Nor did they challenge the regime of the representative democracy as such, but rather they expressed their support, especially in Flanders. Rather than believing that the wrong person had made the decision, or believing that he was not entitled to do so, citizens held that the wrong decision was made by that person. It was thus not the authority of the aldermen in the Weberian sense that was called into question, that is, the legitimacy of the decision-maker, but the reasonableness of the location decision, that is, authority as defined by Friedrich (1972; see also Section 2.2.1).

Regaining authority

Not all local executives were equally successful in countering the challenge to their authority that stemmed from their directive location decisions through rendering account. In other words, not all local executives were equally successful in improving accountees' evaluations of the reasonableness of the location decisions. Again, this was not a measure of changes in support, but a measure of changes in accountees' perceptions of the reasonableness of the location decisions. The extent to which they managed to do so is summarised in Table 25, which shows accountees' eventual evaluations of the reasonableness of the location decisions relative to the initial challenge thereto (see Section 2.2.2).

Again, there are considerable differences. The reasonableness of Van Alphen's location decisions was, for example, eventually positively evaluated by almost the entire Municipal Council, including the majority of the opposition, whereas the reasonableness of Weterings' location decisions was still questioned by a substantial

Table 25. Overview of the extent to which political-executives regained authority

(Sub-)case	Rise to the challenge to authority	
	<i>Political</i>	<i>Social</i>
<i>Kapiteinsbuurt (Rotterdam)</i>	N/A	Moderate improvement
<i>Putsebocht (Rotterdam)</i>	Moderate – significant improvement	Moderate improvement
<i>Sleephellingsstraat (Rotterdam)</i>	Moderate improvement	Moderate improvement
<i>Willem Ruyslaan (Rotterdam)</i>	Moderate improvement	Moderate improvement
<i>Plantagelaan (Rotterdam)</i>	Moderate improvement	Little – moderate improvement
<i>Wollefoppenweg (Rotterdam)</i>	Little to no change	Little – moderate improvement
<i>Den Haag Onder Dak</i>	Moderate improvement	Moderate improvement
<i>'s-Hertogenbosch 1 & 2</i>	Significant decline	Significant decline
<i>'s-Hertogenbosch 3</i>	Moderate improvement	Moderate – significant improvement
<i>Free Clinic (Antwerp)</i>	Moderate improvement	Moderate improvement
<i>Night shelter (Ghent)</i>	N/A	Moderate improvement, but diverse

part of the opposition councillors. Similarly, citizens remained rather critical of the reasonableness of the choice for Wollefoffenweg and Plantagelaan in Rotterdam and particularly Geert Grootestraat and Henri Bayensstraat in 's-Hertogenbosch, whereas the reasonableness of the Willem Ruyslaan location in Rotterdam and Zuiderparkweg and Van Broeckhovenlaan in 's-Hertogenbosch was evaluated substantially better than before by the time of the final interviews.

Table 25 shows that the rendering of account on the whole resulted in a moderate improvement in the authority of political-executives. The rendering of account did not fully counter the challenge to authority that stemmed from the directive location decisions. Political-executives generally did not fully convince all accountees of the reasonableness of the location decisions, as was aptly summarised by alderman Kriens (2007, p. 3): “I realise that I cannot convince everyone of the appropriateness of the location decision.” Some accountees continued to challenge the reasonableness of the location decision after they had been rendered account to.

But, the impact of the rendering of account was substantial nevertheless: most political-executives regained a considerable amount of authority through rendering account, at least with pivotal groups of accountees. The extent to which political-executives regained authority generally rated four on a five-point scale (see also Table 8). This was achieved through creating understanding for the considerations that motivated executives' location decisions, through explaining and justifying the location decisions in a way that meshed with accountees' values, belief systems, and accountability demands. This finding corroborates this thesis' postulate that accountability can perform a bridging function between directive leadership and consensus democracy. Through rendering account, political-executives can regain a considerable

amount of authority. Thus the rendering of account, can function as a means in the hand of political-executives trying to regain authority for directive decisions.

This finding affirms the relevance of studying the practice of accountability from the perspective of the accountant, that is, a leader-centric perspective, supplementing the perspective of the accountee, which has so far dominated accountability studies. The strategic, Machiavellian element of accountability for leaders is as yet under-explored. The rendering of account at least has the potential to contribute to a leader's abilities to regain authority.

Still, there were considerable differences in the effectiveness of various accountability strategies. These strategies and their relative effectiveness are discussed in the next sections, which also provide an exploratory analysis of the mechanisms that cause some accountability strategies to be more effective than others.

11.2 The accountability strategies of local political-executive leaders

The six dimensions of accountability strategies that were introduced in Chapter 3 and that have been used to analyse the individual cases, 'Who?', 'To whom?', 'For what?', 'With what arguments?', 'How?', and 'When?', are now used to analyse the rendering of account by executives in a comparative way. The analysis provides an answer to the second sub-question of this thesis: which accountability strategies do local political-executive leaders employ? First, Table 26 provides a summarising overview of the characteristics of the different accountability strategies that have been discussed in the Chapters 5 through to 10. A comparative analysis is then provided.

Table 26. Overview of accountability strategies

(Sub-)case	Who?	To whom?	For what?	With what arguments?	How?	When?
<i>Kapiteinsbuurt (Rotterdam)</i>	Collective political accountability, also local bureaucrats	Social orientation	Selection	Situational and ideological argumentation	Direct, formal, and informal	Proactive
<i>Putsebocht (Rotterdam)</i>	Collective political accountability	Political and social orientation	Selection	Situational and ideological argumentation	Direct, formal, and informal	Reactive
<i>Sleephellingstraat (Rotterdam)</i>	Collective political accountability	Social orientation, limited political orientation	Siting, partly selection	Technical, situational, and ideological argumentation	Direct, formal, and informal	Proactive
<i>Willem Ruyslaan (Rotterdam)</i>	Collective political accountability	Political and social orientation	Selection	Technical and situational argumentation	Direct, formal, and informal	Proactive

Table 26. Overview of accountability strategies (*continued*)

(Sub-)case	Who?	To whom?	For what?	With what arguments?	How?	When?
<i>Plantagelaan (Rotterdam)</i>	Individual political accountability	Social and political orientation	Siting and selection	Technical, situational, and ideological argumentation	Direct, formal, and informal	Proactive
<i>Wollefoppenweg (Rotterdam)</i>	Individual political accountability	Social orientation	Selection	Ideological argumentation	Direct, formal, and informal	Proactive
<i>Den Haag Onder Dak</i>	Strong individual political accountability	Political and social orientation	Selection and process	Situational argumentation	Direct and indirect, formal, and informal	Proactive
<i>'s-Hertogenbosch 1 & 2</i>	Diffuse political accountability	Social and political orientation, but insufficient rendering of account	Siting	Societal argumentation	Indirect and informal	Reactive
<i>'s-Hertogenbosch 3</i>	Strong individual political accountability	Political, social and media orientation	Process, partly siting	Situational argumentation	Direct and indirect, formal, and informal	Proactive and reactive
<i>Free Clinic (Antwerp)</i>	Collective political accountability, effective after individualisation	Social orientation, limited political orientation	Siting	Situational argumentation with one ideological component	Direct, formal, and informal	Reactive
<i>Night shelter (Ghent)</i>	Collective political accountability	Social orientation	Siting	Situational argumentation	Direct and informal	Proactive

11.2.1 The accountant dimension of accountability

Although the responsibility for the location decisions in the field of human service facilities *de facto* is often shared by a variety of actors, such as local government, care agencies, housing associations, and the police, the political-executives in this study positioned themselves as the main accountors with regard to the location decisions. They pulled responsibility and accountability towards themselves.

First, though, local government had to claim a coordinating role in the location decision-making process – to make the location decision a political-administrative responsibility rather than a responsibility of care agencies. In Flanders this was achieved through financial means (local government bought the properties); in the Netherlands this was mainly achieved through mutual agreements between the care agencies and local government, as part of the nationwide Strategy Plan for Social Relief. As a result, the municipal boards became responsible for the location decisions, contrary to common practice before 2006. In this way, political-executives counteracted the move from government to governance and increased their accountability through showing political, accountable leadership (see also Sections 1.2 and 1.4).

Throughout the cases, the location decisions were positioned as political decisions, for which responsibility lay with the political-executives. In the Dutch cases of The Hague, Rotterdam, and 's-Hertogenbosch, the boards' responsibility manifested itself in formal board decisions on the locations. Although these location decisions had no legal effect (other than a building permit for example, or a revision of a zoning scheme - which also limits the legal accountability for them), they confirmed the political-administrative status of the decision, which helped emphasising the board's political accountability for it. The other executives included in this study also generally emphasised their political responsibility and accountability for the location decisions.

In both Flemish cities as well as in The Hague, Rotterdam, and 's-Hertogenbosch, this was very much appreciated by care agencies because it allowed them to refer critical citizens to the municipal executive. The *stadsdeeldirecteuren* in The Hague report similar gratitude. The responsible executives deliberately put themselves in the line of fire and thereby lessened the burden on others.

The executives in both the Dutch and the Flemish cases believed that making controversial decisions required personal, identifiable leadership and accountability, as was most clearly expressed by Van Alphen and Weterings. Moreover, the local executives generally positioned themselves as 'accountable political leaders' in the sense that they emphasised accountees' abilities to hold them to account. The local executives, with the exception of Carlos Gonçalves, whose personal involvement was not required because of the low controversiality of his decision, took on both the political and social accountability for the location decisions themselves and believed that they bore the personal responsibility for rendering account for the location decision, for both ideological and strategic reasons.

Overall, accountability strategies in which a single political-executive was positioned as the main accountor were more effective in terms of regaining authority when it was substantially challenged. This function was performed most effectively by aldermen Van Alphen and Weterings, in contrast to Eugster who lacked visibility as the responsible alderman. The shared accountable leadership in Antwerp gained considerably in effectiveness when mayor Janssens became the municipal executives' main spokesman and accountee with regard to the Free Clinic. Only the Ghent case differs somewhat in this respect because shared accountability was effective there as it helped to frame the issue as one of public health rather than one of public safety. Shared accountability was also common at the district level in Rotterdam, which increased the accessibility of the political-executives and fostered the feasibility of their labour intensive accountability strategy.

In general regaining authority for controversial decisions in a consensus context through rendering account seemed to require personalised, identifiable, and accountable leadership, at least in those cases where authority was substantially challenged.

This finding corroborates the theoretical claim that directive leadership enhances accountability and alleviates the accountability problems of governance practices (see Borraz & John, 2004, pp. 114-115; Lowndes & Leach, 2004, p. 557; Berg & Rao, 2005, pp. 4-9; Aarts & Thomassen, 2008, p. 7; Larsen, 2005; Steyvers *et al.*, 2009, pp. 14-16). In addition, increased accountability may explain why citizens are appreciative of directive leadership (see Greasley & John, 2011).

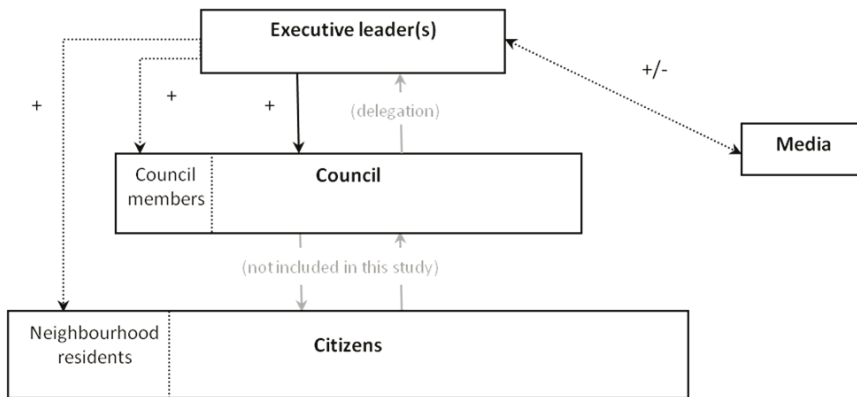
Such individualised accountability is not on a par with the legal principle of collegiality in the municipal board and collegial governance traditions in consensus democracies (see Section 1.3). Nevertheless, it seems crucial in regaining authority for directive decisions. Evidently, this does not mean that the principle of collegiality has to be abandoned, or that obtaining the backing of the other members of the municipal board is not essential when making controversial decisions, far from it (see Chapters 6, 7, and 8). Collegiality may even function as a safety net when the pressure on individual political-executives mounts too high. "When under pressure, executives tend to fall back on the position: 'This was the board's decision'" (Informant 48, senior administrator; see also the Ghent case). Yet, it does mean that regaining authority for directive decisions may require political-executives to resist the tendency to hide behind collegiality, and step to the fore individually.

11.2.2 The accountee dimension of accountability

During the interviews conducted for the current study the executives involved passed a large variety of accountability relationships under review. They believed that they were accountable to, amongst others, the Municipal Council, neighbourhood residents, the citizenry in general, their political parties, the facilities' clientele, national government, the media, senior administrators, and their fellow executives. In that respect Behn's (2001, pp. 198-201) postulate holds up that accountors are accountable to everyone in their working environment. However, for executives some accountability relationships were more important than others. As part of their accountability strategies they dedicated more time and energy to rendering account to particular accountees.

The case study reports have identified four main political accountability relationships for local executives as regards the location decisions, which have been visualised in Figure 3, in which the dashed arrows represent the formal accountability relationships, and the uninterrupted arrows represent the informal accountability relationships. The relevance of each of the accountability relationships for the political-executives in terms of regaining authority is indicated as well. The four main accountability relationships are: a) the direct, formal board-council accountability relationship, b) the direct, informal accountability relationship between the executives and individual councillors and constellations thereof, c) the direct, informal board-citizens accountability relationship, and d) the informal and mutual board-media accountability

Figure 3. Accountability mechanisms in practice



Note: The relevance of the accountability relationships for the political-executives in terms of regaining authority is indicated using the following symbols: ++ (decisive effect), + (significant effect), +/- (peripheral effect), - (negligible effect), - (no effect), see also Table 6.

relationship. The latter had strong influence on executives' authority only in the 's-Hertogenbosch cases.

The case studies show that although the relationship between the board and the council is formally the most important political accountability mechanism, the accountability relationships between the board and individual councillors and constellations thereof and between the board and neighbourhood residents were just as relevant in regaining authority. The former functioned as an influential selection mechanism for those issues that required the added political weight of a council (committee) meeting and the latter was crucial in regaining authority among neighbourhood residents. The board-council relationship was the most important in terms of accountability *de jure*, whereas the other two *de facto* were equally important in terms of the rendering of account.

Overall, the relevance of each of the accountability mechanisms in terms of regaining authority was significant, media excluded, but not decisive, because in most cases the challenge to authority was not fully countered.

These findings corroborate the existence and practical relevance of accountability mechanisms that form an alternative for the accountability mechanisms of the representative regime. The case studies showed that contemporary accountability relationships between local executives and citizens, *in casu* neighbourhood residents, for a large part do not operate along the traditional, representative chain of accountability that runs via the Municipal Council, but rather along alternative direct accountability mechanisms (compare Strøm, 2000, p. 267). "Local executives

do not see their accountability [in relation to citizens, NK] as running through the mechanisms of the representative democracy” (Informant 23, senior administrator). As far as neighbourhood residents were concerned, the local political-executives were the main accountors, not their representatives in the Municipal Council, and local executives crucially rendered account to neighbourhood residents directly through a variety of mechanisms such as public meetings. The recognition of the importance of such accountability mechanisms and the effective rendering of account therein proved essential for local executives in regaining authority, which illustrates the increased importance of the direct rendering of account (see Meijer, 2005; Meijer & Schillemans, 2009). Such alternative mechanisms might counterbalance the decreased effectiveness of the traditional representative accountability arrangements (see McGarvey, 2001; Papadopoulos, 2003, 2007; Quinn, 2007).

The findings also draw attention to the diversity of forums within each group of traditional accountees. The forum of ‘the citizens’ is composed of a diverse set of stakeholders that hold different values and belief systems (neighbourhood residents, non-immediate residents, business owners, etc.). Likewise, the forum of ‘the council’ not only refers to the Municipal Council as a whole, but also encompasses a diverse set of constellations of individual council members to which account is rendered. Accountability forums were formed by coalition and opposition, separate political party groups (particularly political-executives’ own), and also individual councillors. Here too, there was diversity of values and beliefs and of accountability demands that a political-executive had to reckon with in regaining authority.

The Rotterdam case in particular shows that political-executives have considerable room to manoeuvre in terms of shaping these accountability arrangements. Through separating different stakeholders and thereby creating new forums, and by establishing individual accountability relationships, these executives managed to substantially increase the effectiveness of their rendering of account. By means of these second order accountability strategies, they established effective accountability mechanisms that functioned as alternatives for the traditional representative accountability arrangements.

11.2.3 The conduct, justification, mechanisms, and timing dimensions

Each of the following sub-sections analyses the four remaining dimensions of accountability, ‘For what?’, ‘With what arguments?’, ‘How?’, and ‘When?’, for the four main accountability relationships that were identified in the previous sub-section. The accountability relationship between political-executives and individual councillors and political-executives’ political party groups, respectively, is discussed under the board-council accountability relationship.

The board-council accountability relationship

In their relationship with the municipal councils, executives often tried to control what they were accountable for. Particularly aldermen Van Alphen and Weterings tried to make strict arrangements with their respective municipal councils that they would not be held to account for the location decisions as such, but rather for the extent to which they honoured the predetermined policy frameworks and for the process in which the location decisions were made. *Ex post* the executives tried to influence the subject of accountability debates, too. Particularly alderman Weterings aimed at avoiding substantive evaluations of the location decisions by the council; the effectiveness thereof was strongly influenced by the fact that the council itself refrained from discussing them. The politics of accountability allowed Weterings to get away with that.

In their accountability strategies, the local executives, in addition, tried to exercise control over the mechanisms through which they rendered account. In relation to both the Municipal Council and neighbourhood residents, they emphasised that the main accountability mechanism was the one between them and the Municipal Council as it manifested itself in the formal contacts between the board and the council. Alderman Weterings, for example, on several occasions emphasised that the council would have the opportunity to publicly hold him to account *ex post*, just like many of his colleagues, who often referred to the traditional mechanisms of the representative democracy in response to evaluative questions or remarks from councillors in earlier stages.

This did not only concern the 'To whom?' question, but also the 'How?', and 'When?' questions, as the case of alderman Kriens showed when she referred a municipal councillor who attended a public meeting to the formal council meeting (see Leefbaar Rotterdam, 2009). Similarly, during public meetings, neighbourhood residents were often 'reminded' that the board was accountable to the council and that this indirect, layered procedure was the appropriate accountability mechanism of holding local government to account for location decisions.

Informal accountability mechanisms

At the same time a considerable part of the accountability activities in the board-council relationship took place outside of these formal accountability mechanisms. The 'real' accountability mechanisms between councillors and members of the board often operated behind the scenes. The rendering of account took place in informal and direct contacts between councillors and executives. In both Flanders and the Netherlands, councillors often contacted executives directly in informal settings when they wanted to hold the latter to account. Coffee breaks, the corridors of city hall, informal

telephone calls, and so forth were important platforms for the holding to account by councillors and the rendering of account by executives.

Rather than being manifestations of 'the' accountability relationship between the board and the council as a whole, these accountability mechanisms were expressions of the informal accountability relationships between executives and individual councillors, which functioned as alternatives for the formal board-council accountability relationship. Such mechanisms operated between councillors and board members of the same political party, but also spun the coalition-opposition divide.

Moreover, the influence of party political accountability mechanisms should not be underestimated. In the Flemish cases, but even in the Dutch local context where there is a formal separation of the legislative power and executive power, executives were generally held to account over the location decisions in party meetings as well as other informal party political accountability mechanisms. Such mechanisms functioned as important alternatives for the formal board-council accountability relationship, too. The Hague, among others, showed that party political influence on the location decision as a consequence thereof extended to the board.

In the perception of both councillors and executives, these informal contacts were important accountability mechanisms that functioned as a selection mechanism for those issues that required the added political weight of a council committee meeting or even a council meeting. Strictly speaking, such contacts were of course not *public* accountability mechanisms since the rendering of account often took place in private (see Bovens & Schillemans, 2009, pp. 23-24). Yet, the calling to account and the rendering of account by public actors that took place within these mechanisms evidently operated in the public interest, and in the perception of both accountees and accountors they formed an essential element of the public accountability relationship between the board and the council.

In order to be viable alternative accountability mechanisms, such informal accountability mechanisms required good working-relations between councillors and executives, more so than formal accountability mechanisms. When these were under pressure, the importance and the effectiveness of informal accountability relations from the perspective of the executive was substantially reduced by strained relations, as the 's-Hertogenbosch (rounds 1 & 2) case showed. When the alderman's relationship with the council deteriorated over the hostels dossier, the alderman lost contact with the Municipal Council, which reduced the possibilities for effectively explaining and justifying the location decisions. From the perspective of the accountee, though, the accountability mechanism's effectiveness was not necessarily reduced since the accountee could still hold the executive to account effectively.

The function of accountability mechanisms

In the relationship between the council and the board, formal public accountability mechanisms did not follow the phased accountability trajectory along the lines of 1) providing information, 2) discussion between the accountor and the accountee, and 3) passing judgement, and posing sanctions if deemed desirable by the accountee (see Bovens, 2007). Rather, the judgement stage often preceded the rendering of account and the discussion stage. Councillors mostly only called executives to account publicly when, in their perception, something had gone wrong in the decision-making processes (of course, the perceptions of coalition councillors and opposition councillors differed strongly). Publicly calling an alderman to account, it seems, functioned as a sanction in itself since the act suggested wrongdoing. Forcing an alderman to render account publicly was used as a means to penalise him.

In the case of opposition parties in particular this may be explained by party political interests. Only if there was something to be won in electoral or political-strategic terms, would an executive be called to account publicly (e.g., 's-Hertogenbosch (round 3), also Feijenoord). This proves that accountability processes themselves are of a political nature. This influence of the politics of accountability on political-executives' abilities to regain authority through the rendering of account was substantial.

At the same time, particularly in the absence of forthcoming municipal elections, individual councillors showed a genuine interest in forming a fair and well-informed judgement on the location decisions outside of party political interests. Similarly, local executives themselves showed *verantwoordingsbereidheid*: they were often (intrinsically) motivated to explain and justify the location decisions because they believed that accountees had the right to be rendered account to, or because they wanted to explain and justify their decisions themselves, or because they valued the judgement of the council. In general, local executives wanted to be accountable and wanted to render account because it granted them room to manoeuvre in making controversial decisions and to show leadership (see also Ruscio, 2008). Van Gunsteren's (1999) proposition that politicians portray an aversion to accountability, thus, does not always hold. Rather, political-executives preferred particular accountability mechanisms over others and tried to influence to whom, for what, with what arguments, how, and when they rendered account.

The transformation of the substantive into the procedural

In the board-council accountability relationship, the policy frameworks that were established in the earlier phases of the location decision-making processes performed a crucial function. Particularly in 's-Hertogenbosch (rounds 2 & 3) and The Hague, but also in Rotterdam, the frameworks not only established the procedural outline of the decision-making processes, but also the substantive criteria that would be used in the

location decision-making processes. Through these policy frameworks, the main criteria for the selection of locations were agreed upon by the local councils. Thereby, the executives in relation to the councils became accountable for carefully having applied the criteria and for keeping their promises, rather than for the substantive considerations that motivated their location decisions. Consequently, executives would, in principle, remain free from negative sanctions as long as they honoured the policy frameworks. Following the dualistic nature of the relationship between the council and the board in the Dutch cases, the substantive and political aspects of the location decisions were, thereby, transformed into procedural aspects. As a result, the location decisions were depoliticised because the councils agreed to refrain from passing political judgement on the location decisions as such.

This explains why the rendering of account in procedural terms in relation to municipal councils was so effective for the aldermen Weterings and Van Alphen, even though location decisions are potentially highly controversial in the political sense. Through the councils' agreement on the policy frameworks, the reasonableness of the location decisions for the council had become a matter of the extent to which they met predetermined criteria. In the accountability relationships between the council and executives, the normative aspects of the location decisions in terms of values and motivations were eliminated from the accountability relationships to a large extent. Consequently, councillors "had only the agreements that were made to go by" (Informant 63, councillor), which left little room for substantive debate in the discussion phase of the accountability relationships. This reduced the political vulnerability of executives and increased the likelihood of location decisions being enforced. The procedural arrangements and accompanying accountability relationships provided local executives the necessary footing in an otherwise politically sensitive dossier.²⁸

Local executives became particularly vulnerable when they deviated from the predetermined policy framework, as Oudshoorn did with the Putsebocht location decision. The 's-Hertogenbosch (rounds 1 & 2) case, though, proved that honouring arrangements (largely at least) does not necessarily safeguard local executives against (party) political volatility of the council, especially in the light of strong social opposition and/or under the shadow of municipal elections, particularly if the board-council relation turns out to be more monistic than an alderman expects. Such risks were increased by the fact that substantive criteria generally were open to interpretation and the fact that few locations met all criteria. Furthermore, councillors were very much inclined to substantively evaluate the location decisions even though it was not their task (e.g., The Hague). Moreover, several Informants from local councils preferred substantive debate over procedural deliberation (Informants 18 & 63, councillors). *La politique* is essentially about norms and values, not procedures, they held.

This may explain why aldermen such as Weterings were criticised for not rendering account for their location decisions in substantive terms, notwithstanding the fact that critics acknowledged that the executives honoured the respective policy frameworks. In relation to municipal councils, local executives' authority was still closely related with the substantive reasonableness of the location decision, particularly under the monistic relationships in Flanders (see also Verhelst *et al.*, 2010). In The Hague alderman Van Alphen displayed particular sensitivity to this fact by rendering account for his location decisions to the council mainly in procedural terms, but supplemented with substantive argumentation. Whereas the latter may not have been necessary formally speaking, in practice it was crucial for regaining authority.

Overall, in the board-council accountability relationship, rendering account in procedural terms was the most effective in countering the challenge to authority that is embedded in controversial location decisions because it depoliticised the issue. Still, the supplementary rendering of account in substantive terms was of considerable importance.

Looking at the board-citizens accountability relationship in the next section, the picture changes considerably.

The board-citizens accountability relationship

In addition to the board-council accountability relationship, the board-citizens relationship was also relevant for regaining authority. This accountability relationship does not belong to the accountability regime of the representative democracy, in which there is only an indirect accountability relationship between the board and citizens, but nevertheless proved crucial for political-executives' abilities to regain authority as regards their controversial location decisions.

The importance of informal accountability mechanisms

Citizens expected local executives to explain and justify their location decisions, and in order to regain authority in the eyes of those citizens local executives had to honour these expectations by convincingly rendering account for their location decisions. All local executives involved in this study recognised the existence and importance of such a direct accountability relationship between them and neighbourhood residents. Yet, not all were able to effectively convince neighbourhood residents of the reasonableness of their location decisions.

In regaining authority, informal accountability mechanisms were very relevant. Referring neighbourhood residents to the indirect, formal political accountability mechanisms that run via the Municipal Council was effective on occasion, but only if it was supplemented with informal and direct ways of rendering account to citizens at the same time. Citizens generally respected the regime of the representative democracy

and recognised the reasonableness thereof in controversial location decision-making processes such as these, but still expressed a demand for the additional direct rendering of account. Representative regime accountability mechanisms alone did not suffice since citizens felt fobbed off by executives when the latter only referred them to their councillors.

Both local executives and neighbourhood residents indicated that the public meetings that immediately followed the location decisions were one of the main contexts in which the direct accountability relationship between the two actors manifested itself, alongside private meetings, e-mail, and letters. This meant that local executives had to recognise these meetings as such and had to explain and justify the location decision in terms of their intentions, considerations, and values.

The effectiveness of the rendering of account increased when local executives took a personal approach, which enabled them to have 'a proper conversation' with accountees. In smaller settings, the interactive nature of accountability showed up well. It enabled citizens to ask for the information they wanted, and to pose those evaluative questions they believed were important, which, in turn, enabled local executives to attune their rendering of account to the specific accountability demands that were placed on them. Drawing from the work of Shapiro *et al.* (1994), the relative effectiveness of the direct rendering of account can also be explained in more political-strategic terms. The direct rendering of account enables political-executives to deliberately tailor their accounts to the recipients. Further, rendering account directly, preferably in person, enhances accountees' perception of the sincerity of the accountant; it suggests that the accountant is sensitive to the accountee (Shapiro *et al.*, 1994). Authority itself, in the sense of being 'in authority' or 'power over', may also play a role here. The direct rendering of account may function as an authoritarian argument (e.g., Ghent).

Some of Rotterdam's district executives took the personal, direct approach to the extreme by visiting individual households proactively and/or by organising a series of small scale meetings with neighbourhood residents. Likewise, executives such as Weterings made sure that they personally were very accessible to neighbourhood residents and regularly explained and justified the location decisions in informal meetings with individual members of the local community. Citizens that played a leading role in the social opposition, for example, even had Weterings' personal mobile phone number and were invited to call him at any time. Other executives as well reported close contacts with neighbourhood residents in informal meetings, via e-mail, etc. Both neighbourhood residents and executives perceived these contacts as important parts of their accountability relationships. The direct accessibility of political-executives was very much appreciated (see also Hofstede, 2001).

Such approaches were of course very time-consuming, made an alderman more vulnerable, and may not always have been feasible. Still, a too impersonal approach,

like the one Eugster took, was counterproductive. Executives will therefore have to strike the right balance.

Variety of accountability demands

What was important to recognise in the board-citizens accountability relationship, was that different accountees kept different perspectives and that they had different expectations of the way in which executives rendered account. Local business owners and professionals, for example, had a different perspective than neighbourhood residents.

In recognition thereof, Rotterdam executives developed at least two different sets of explanations and justifications for their location decisions called, respectively, the 'citizen argumentation' and the 'expert argumentation'. In doing so they attuned their accounts of why a particular location was a reasonable one to the perspectives of their audiences. These argumentations functioned as different stories for different audiences, which increased the effectiveness of the executives' rendering of account, because they meshed with the value preferences of their respective audiences (see Friedrich, 1972, p. 61). This strategy enabled political-executives to tailor their explanations to the recipients, which is an important predictor of the extent to which accountees judge explanations as adequate (Shapiro *et al.*, 1994).

On the one hand, the use of different argumentations increased the effectiveness of the accountability strategies. On the other, it also caused difficulties when the different audiences became intertwined. Executives in both Rotterdam (Prins Alexander and Kralingen-Crooswijk) and The Hague (Vinkensteynstraat), for example, recalled public meetings in which local bureaucrats, e.g., communication advisors, spatial planners, etc., participated as neighbourhood residents. For the executives, these were "hazardous situations" (Informants 3 & 46, aldermen) that severely complicated producing a convincing account of why a particular location was chosen because different accountability expectations merged, whereas these could not easily be satisfied at the same time with the same account. "That was one of the most difficult meetings to cope with because I had to serve both interests at the same time, without directly comparing them" (alderman). The fact that the citizen argumentation and the expert argumentation became entangled led to additional questioning of the reasonableness of the location decision because expert-citizens scrutinised the citizen argumentation. More generally, neighbourhood residents often collected expert information from professionals working in the field of social relief, which blurred the distinction between citizens and experts (Informants 20 & 71, neighbourhood residents, 47 & 82, experts).

In other meetings, like in Kralingen-Crooswijk in Rotterdam and in Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham in Ghent, councillors gave rise to similar situations by showing up in public meetings. Here too, different audiences with different expectations met, which

could not easily be satisfied at the same time because the two groups held different sets of values. Some councillors were well aware of this and doubted whether they should have attended public meetings (e.g., Vos, in Municipality of The Hague, 2008g, also Informant 63, councillor). Others, like Leefbaar Rotterdam's Hennie van Schaik, deliberately attended such meetings to support neighbourhood residents in their opposition (Leefbaar Rotterdam, 2009).

These cases simultaneously showed both the relevance of reckoning with the different accountability expectations of accountees and attuning one's account to this, and the practical impossibility of maintaining two or more lines of argument at the same time. One possible coping strategy is to separate different accountees as much as possible. Alderman Kriens, for example, put Van Schaik in his place by referring him to council meetings. Similarly, practically all Dutch executives organised informal, closed meetings with the council or the responsible council committee, in which they rendered account soon after the location decisions to satisfy early accountability demand. Some of Rotterdam's executives also organised separate meetings in which they rendered account to different groups of accountees, such as local business owners and (representatives of) different groups of neighbourhood residents, such as ethical minorities and the elderly. The latter was particularly important since the group of 'neighbourhood residents' is very diverse in terms of the sets of values they hold (see, e.g., the Ghent case). Local executives will, therefore, have to take into consideration factors such as profession and cultural background when composing an account of why they chose a particular location.

The evaluation of government conduct

In composing such accounts it was particularly important for local executives to recognise that for neighbourhood residents 'location' was an important issue. Some local executives seemed to believe that location was not of great consequence. Rotterdam district executive Van Zuuren's (in Van Giessen, 2011) claim that "all locations are suitable"²⁹, for example, seemed to suggest that virtually all location decisions were equally reasonable as it was used as a justification of a location decision. Likewise, some political-executives held that neighbourhood residents were more concerned with issues such as public safety, or the procedural fairness of the location decision. Some councillors shared this assertion (e.g., Informant 64).

Neighbourhood residents and others did indeed attach particular value to such issues, but that did not mean that for them location was not an issue. Quite the contrary: for practically all neighbourhood resident Informants the 'Why here?' question was the one that sprang to mind first. Although it was often closely related with issues such as public safety, location for them was a very important aspect of the location decisions as such. The 'Why here?' question generally formed the point of departure

for their evaluation of the reasonableness of the executives' decisions. Neighbourhood residents believed that since they were confronted with the location decision, they were entitled to an explanation and justification of that decision in substantive terms: 'Why was this decision made as it was?' (see Friedrich, 1972, p. 58; Shapiro *et al.*, 1994). Moreover, they required an explanation that assessed the relative suitability of alternative locations: this may be a good location, but why are other locations not better? Not all neighbourhood residents were equally susceptible to local executives' argumentations, but they all believed that such an account should at least be provided.

The fact that these expectations existed more or less inherently may provide an explanation for the fact that the proactive rendering of account was generally more effective than the reactive rendering of account. Citizens expected their executives to explain their decisions, and having to ask for the rendering of account was perceived as an additional task that was only necessary when an alderman failed to provide an account on his own initiative. An executive who did not proactively render account automatically ended up in the dock for not having taken citizens' implicit expectations seriously.

In the literature on explanation adequacy several potential explanations for this effect can be found. It can be hypothesised that the proactive rendering of account was more effective because it was voluntary in appearance and demonstrated that the decision underwent a process of active consideration (see Hearit, 2006, p. 211). An alternative socio-psychological explanation could be that by proactively rendering account leaders recognised accountees as critical reasoners, which honoured their self-conception (Brown, 2000). In addition, the effectiveness of the proactive rendering of account can also be explained by the fact that it gave executives the power to, to some extent, point the accountability debate in a preferred direction and therewith tailor their accounts to the recipients (see Shapiro *et al.*, 1994). The Rotterdam executives, for example, deliberately steered the debate towards the subject of fair distribution of facilities across the city, which was a field in which they had developed an extensive account of why particular locations were more reasonable than others that meshed with the values held by neighbourhood residents.

Overall, citizens held autonomous accountability demands in three more or less separate fields, which revolved around the different evaluative questions, labelled 'siting', 'selection'- and 'process'-questions.

- [siting] Is it reasonable to establish a facility at this particular location?
- [selection] Is this location more reasonable than other locations?
- [process] Was the location decision-making process reasonable?

The first question concerns the reasonableness of the location itself; is it a reasonable location for a human service facility? Or rather, is the executive's decision to opt for this particular location a reasonable one? This was, for example, the main dispute concerning the Geert Grotestraat location in the second round in 's-Hertogenbosch, where citizens as well as councillors strongly believed that the location was too close to residential buildings. The siting-question is thus an absolute one: is the location as such justifiable? It is closely related to what Gordon and Jasper (1996, p. 163) call "local rhetoric" since it relates to this one site. By contrast, the selection-question is a comparative one: how does this particular location compare to others, and has a reasonable decision been made from a comparative perspective? It compares the suitability of two or more locations. This question relates to what Gordon and Jasper (1996, p. 163) call "semi-local" rhetoric.

The difference between these first two questions is considerable since their might be better alternatives to perfectly reasonable locations, and the best location available is not necessarily a reasonable one. Zuiderparkweg in 's-Hertogenbosch (round 3), for example, was generally believed to be a reasonable location, but most people still had a preference for other locations.

Then again, the third question is of an entirely different nature because it is concerned with the procedural aspects of the location decision rather than the substantive ones, although, admittedly this is a rather crude distinction. This question relates to Tyler's (2000) concept of procedural fairness.

These findings should be interpreted in the light of the body of literature that claims that normative expectations are relevant for the evaluation of government conduct (Miller, 1974, p. 260; McGraw *et al.*, 1993; Schively, 2007). As regards controversial location decisions, accountees' evaluations of the substantive, normative considerations motivating public decisions substantially influenced their attitudes towards the responsible executives (see also Shapiro *et al.*, 1994). In the otherwise highly political-strategic game of facility siting, the answers that executives gave to the 'Why here?' question and the way in which they communicated and framed these answers were highly relevant, in addition to accountees' outcome and process evaluations. Simultaneously, the findings confirm the findings of procedural fairness theorists that people are concerned with the fairness of the procedures by which decisions are made (Tyler, 2000; Van den Bos, 2005; Esaiasson, 2010). Accountees judged both the substantive and the procedural aspects of the location decisions. Taken together, the findings corroborate the claim that successful legitimization of specific decisions requires justifications of both content and process (e.g., Bobocel & Debeyer, 1998). It seems, therefore, that the study of the evaluation of government conduct needs to take both aspects of decision-making into account, rather than either one or the other.

In particular, neighbourhood residents evaluated the way in which local executives considered the interests of neighbourhood residents in the location decision, the democratic quality of the decision-making process, the distribution of facilities across the city, and executives' mainly ideological claim that the facilities' clientele had the right to live in residential estates. This explains why the ideologically oriented justification of the Rotterdam executives, particularly alderman Kriens, which appealed to the idea of fair distribution, was relatively successful. Similarly, the Antwerp executives' ideologically motivated decision to relocate the Free Clinic in the area from which its clientele originated, appealed to the values held by neighbourhood residents. By contrast, Eugster and Weterings' ideological principle that the hostels' clientele had the right to live on residential estates met strong resistance. Whereas the former argument appealed to the same values neighbourhood residents held, the latter did not mesh with the values held by neighbourhood residents and consequently negatively affected citizens' perception of the reasonableness of the location decision. Rather, neighbourhood residents in 's-Hertogenbosch wanted to be provided a justification for the fact that other interests had been valued over theirs instead. But, such an account was not provided by the executives.

From the perspective of the accountant, taking the norms and values accountees subscribe to into consideration when rendering account improved its effectiveness (see also Lerner & Tetlock, 1999). In doing so, substantive values mattered, because neighbourhood residents easily recognised that location decisions necessarily rest on subjective and political evaluations of competing values (see Rose, 1993, p. 99). In particular, neighbourhood residents wanted to know how their interests and their arguments had been weighed against others.

It must be acknowledged that some Informants irrevocably put their self-interest first (e.g., Informant 68, neighbourhood). Overall though, the findings corroborate the findings of the body of literature that is critical of the NIMBY label for the reason that it carries negative connotations that associate NIMBYism with self-interest, rather than with normative beliefs (e.g., Burningham, 2000; Wolsink, 2006; Van der Horst, 2007; see also Schively, 2007, p. 257; Verhoeven, 2009). It seems that, as Vittes *et al.* (1993) claim, substantive values are an important frame of reference for accountees when evaluating government conduct in NIMBY-like dossiers. In explaining controversial decisions substance is very important (Shapiro *et al.*, 1994). This means that leaders, in order to regain authority, not only have to communicate their decisions (Esaiaasson, 2010, p. 356), but also the considerations that led up to the decision (see also Friedrich, 1972).

Non-comparative accounts

When rendering account, most of the local executives included in this study mainly focused on the siting-question. By contrast, the rendering of account in comparative

terms - why this particular location and not another? - was rare. Few local executives publicly compared the availability and suitability of different locations in an attempt to explain and justify their location decisions - with the notable exception of the executives in Kralingen-Crooswijk in the Willem Ruyslaan sub-case.

This approach was motivated by at least three types of considerations. First, the number of available locations was often limited, which made an explicit comparison less meaningful (e.g., Antwerp). In the Ghent case, in particular, this was a key characteristic of executives' accountability strategy; it was held that there was only one possible location.

Second, several political-strategic motives came into play. An explicit comparison of concrete locations might have caused unnecessary turmoil in different neighbourhoods in which no facilities were to be established, especially when such a comparison was made in run-up to the final location decision, but also *ex post*. This is why local government, particularly in Rotterdam, The Hague, and Ghent, went to great lengths to keep alternative locations out of publicity. Moreover, the explicit comparison of locations might have provoked public debate about whether particular locations fitted the criteria, especially since this could not always be determined truly objectively. Location decisions were inevitably non-rational (see Holton *et al.*, 1973, p. 271). Consequently, the final decisions were often a matter of 'weighing' the suitability of locations (also Informant 44, senior administrator), which made them almost inherently susceptible to criticism. "Of course no location is ever one hundred per cent perfect" (Informant 66, senior administrator). Alternatively, some local administrators held that neighbourhood residents lacked the knowledge and skills to rate the location decisions at their true value (e.g., Informant 70). Explicit comparison also brings with it the risk of exposing considerations that local executives would like to keep behind closed doors, such as party-political considerations or details of the decision-making within municipal boards. An open comparison of locations, in the perception of local executives, thus, may have caused undesired debate, which was something they tried to avoid.

Third, local executives and the senior administrators who assisted them in these decision-making processes often genuinely did not make a distinction between the siting-question and the selection-question, or did not believe that the distinction was important. They believed that it sufficed to show the reasonableness of the location decision in the sense of the siting-question: showing that it is reasonable to establish a facility at a particular location, or in other words that it is a reasonable location *sec*, irrespective of the availability of other locations. The latter, for example, was one of the explanations for the rather limited substantive rendering of account for the location decisions in both 's-Hertogenbosch cases; citizens' demands for explanation and justification were mainly interpreted in terms of the siting- and process-questions,

whereas neighbourhood residents, and also councillors, expected an explanation in terms of the selection-question as well. They uttered a lack of accountability (see also Gordon & Jasper, 1996, p. 163) because they would have wanted executives to render account for their location decisions in comparative terms.

The effective rendering of account, though, did not necessarily take all three aspects of the location decision into consideration. Ghent's executives, for example, were relatively successful in regaining authority, while addressing the siting-question only. Neither was the rendering of account generally more successful when it focused on siting, selection or process. Rather, the effectiveness of the rendering of account depended on the extent to which executives recognised and responded to accountees' demands with regard to these three aspects of their location decisions. Therefore, the effectiveness of the rendering of account was contextually dependent.

Variety of argumentations

At the same time some overall patterns can be recognised in the effectiveness of accountability strategies as regards the substantive aspects of rendering account in the board-citizens accountability relationship. The procedural rendering of account that proved to be the most effective in the board-council relationship, for example, generally failed to convince neighbourhood residents of the reasonableness of directive location decisions.

Although citizens generally acknowledged the reasonableness of the representative democracy and some even subscribed to the call of directive leadership in dossiers like human service facility siting, they perceived the directive decision-making process as elementarily unreasonable. Thus, although they mostly acknowledged the legitimacy of local executives as the decision-makers, they did not believe that this made the location decisions reasonable. The alleged shortcoming could be resolved in some measure by the rendering of account in substantive terms, but for a large part it was inevitable because citizens generally simply would have liked to have had the opportunity to participate in the decision-making – which would have required a redesign of the location decision-making process (as in the case of 's-Hertogenbosch). At the same time the case studies show that the rendering of account for process to some extent can contribute to countering this challenge because neighbourhood residents held procedural accountability demands (see the process-question above).

Simply explaining the decision-making process in the sense of reporting how the decision was made, however, did not suffice. What neighbourhood residents wanted to know was how their interests were weighed against the interests of others and the 'common good' in the directive decision. They expected executives to provide a justification for their considerations in these terms.

Overall, the substantive rendering of account was more effective in regaining authority for directive location decisions than the procedural rendering of account (see also Shapiro *et al.*, 1994). The reasonableness of the location decision was perceived in terms of motivations and values, rather than in terms of procedures.

Explaining the process is a platitude. (...) Warding off substantive questions with procedural answers does not work, so with that you cannot build trust as an alderman. (...) It is about content, content, and content. (...) It is much more in the 'Why?' question, the substantive question. (...) It is not that people then surrender, but they then have respect and understand the decision.

(Informant 47, expert)

Overall, it seems that technical and situational justifications for location decisions were the most effective in the board-citizens accountability relationship. If local executives managed to convince residents that their location decision was the only or the best alternative, their authority was served best because it eliminated political conflict. This strategy was employed by many of the executives involved, which mirrors Amy's (1984, p. 584) postulate that "[politicians] often find it safest to justify controversial decisions on technical grounds (...), and thus conveniently avoid the riskier and trickier task of justifying those choices on moral or political grounds." The approach resonates one of the core aspects of consensus democracy, namely the depoliticisation of issues (Lijphart, 1968). In their explanations and justifications of their location decisions, political-executives downplayed the political and non-rational nature of location decisions (see also Holton *et al.*, 1973; Dear, 1974, p. 48; Rose, 1993, p. 99). This neutralised the potential for political dispute concerning the location decisions to the extent that neighbourhood residents believed that technical and situational justifications provided reasonable explanations for the location decisions. This finding contrasts with McGraw *et al.*'s (1993, p. 290) finding that "principled justifications - appeals to normative principles to support the claim that a controversial policy decision was the right thing to do - have consistently emerged among the most effective accounts, resulting in higher levels of satisfaction and more positive evaluations of the official than other types of explanations."

At the same time neighbourhood residents, however, were well aware of the non-rational, normative, and political aspects of the location decisions. Citizens quickly recognised that the decisions necessarily rested on subjective and political evaluations of competing values (see Rose, 1993). A purely technical justification, therefore, was almost never tenable. The effective rendering of account required a combination of both technical and normative justifications rather than an exclusive focus on only one of the two. This explains the effectiveness of the accountability strategies of the

Antwerp, Rotterdam, and The Hague's executives particularly, who combined predominantly technical and situational explanations for the location decisions with a set of carefully chosen ideological justifications (mainly fair distribution) that functioned as spearheads. Such combinations of depoliticisation and limited politicisation seems to be the most effective because they enabled local executives to develop convincing narratives of their location decisions that did justice to both the political and the non-political aspects of the location decisions.

The effectiveness of such accounts was contingent upon the extent to which local executives succeeded in convincing citizens of the reasonableness of the location decision (see also McGraw *et al.*, 1993, p. 296). The previous sections have already showed that this required executives to attune their accounts to the accountability demands of their accountees. At the same time local executives also influenced the path the public discourse took by proactively rendering account or by focusing on particular motivations for the location decisions. Local executives also had to take into account the assertiveness of the local population, that is, the extent to which neighbourhood residents were inclined to challenge an executive's assertions.

It seems that in Flanders, neighbourhood residents were less inclined to do so than in the Netherlands. Flemish neighbourhood residents seemed to be less inclined to challenge the reasonableness of political-executives technical and situational justifications for location decisions. Other than the Flemish cases, the location decisions in the Netherlands were more easily portrayed as being of a political nature, especially as regards the fair share argument in Rotterdam and The Hague and the strongly challenged ideological argument from 's-Hertogenbosch that homeless people have the right to live on residential estates. These differences may be explained by the relative 'power difference' (Hofstede, 2001). The Netherlands have a relatively low score of 38 on this dimension of culture. By contrast, Belgium³⁰ has a relatively high score of 65 (Hofstede, 2012). In higher power distance societies citizens, *ceteris paribus*, are more likely to respect the use of coercive power in the government-citizen relation than in lower power distance societies (Hofstede, 2001, pp. 110-113). This made it less plausible that Flemish residents would challenge the reasonableness of the board's location decisions and the accounts that were provided by political-executives in justification thereof, especially since there was considerable political backing from the municipal councils.

Although some neighbourhood residents Informants demanded greater transparency (e.g., Informants 59 & 71), it is questionable whether greater transparency would have heightened the perceived reasonableness of the location decisions. Greater transparency may also have caused further politicisation because it does not necessarily increase citizens' trust in local government (De Fine Licht, 2011; Grimmelikhuijsen, 2012). Being fully transparent about what motivated the location decisions may have

laid bare some of the pragmatic and political-strategic considerations that drove the location decisions. Citizens might not necessarily have appreciated those. It is, for example, highly questionable if making explicit all true considerations in the Antwerp and The Hague cases would have increased the acceptability of the location decision for citizens. In addition to this, it is questionable whether such a fully transparent account in practice could have been provided since the final decisions were often a matter of 'weighing' the suitability of locations. Being accountable is not simply a matter of being fully transparent (compare Daniels & Sabin, 2008) because it involves the construction of a narrative through which the location decision is justified (Black, 2008, pp. 151-152). Political-executives have to develop an account that explains and justifies their location decisions.

To sum up, the analysis above has shown that in the board-citizens accountability relationship not only the narrative itself was relevant, but also the settings in which account was rendered to neighbourhood residents, the mechanisms through which account was rendered, the match between accountability demands of different groups of citizens and the account provided, and the timing of the rendering of account.

The board-media accountability relationship

Attention now turns to the fourth accountability relationship that proved relevant in the case studies: the board-media accountability relationship. The role of the media in terms of accountability was an ambiguous one. On the one hand, the media formed a stage on which local executives were called to account by neighbourhood residents and other accountees, and on which local executives rendered account. Newspapers, for example, received and published several letters to the editor in which the reasonableness of the location decision was challenged. Citizens used media such as newspapers to effectively call executives to account. Likewise, local executives used (local) media to explain and justify their location decisions and to communicate their arguments. Alderman Kriens for example participated in a *Mediacafé*, organised by a regional newspaper, in which she rendered account for the Wollefoppenweg location decision. As such, the media provided a platform for manifestations of the accountability relationships between citizens and executives.

On the other hand, the media sometimes took on the role of accountee. The 's-Hertogenbosch cases are a good illustration thereof. In these cases, the *Brabants Dagblad* strongly embraced the role of accountee, as an independent forum whose intention it was to form a judgement on the conduct of the aldermen Eugster and Weterings. Rather than as a witness, or as a medium in accordance with the exact meaning of the word, the newspaper acted as a judge, as an autonomous accountee. Particularly in the case of Eugster, reporters were well-willing to pose a judgement on the alderman's conduct and on 'her' location decisions, which in turn strongly affected the position of

Eugster vis-à-vis neighbourhood residents and the council. *Brabants Dagblad* reporters believed Geert Grootestraat and Henri Bayensstraat were bad locations and felt that they, as an accountee, had to express their judgement (Informant 75). Practically all of 's-Hertogenbosch Informants mention the strong influence of the *Brabants Dagblad* in the hostels dossier.

Recognising the power of the newspaper Eugster's successor Weterings, more so than Eugster herself, perceived the accountability relationship between himself and the media as a reciprocal relationship. Weterings was not hesitant to call *Brabants Dagblad* reporters to account for being too one-sided in their coverage of the hostels dossier. He seems to have been more assertive with regard to this than his predecessor.

Other executives as well recognised the potential power of the media. That is why detailed communication plans were developed in preparation of the location decisions in Rotterdam, for example. One of the aims was to control the stream of communication in particular with regard to the timing of the public announcement of the location decision. Unfortunate timing can have profound effects, as the Wollefoppenweg sub-case showed. Most local governments put considerable thought into the message that they were going to communicate (e.g., the The Hague plan of action), which is crucial for effective communication.

Municipalities such as Rotterdam and The Hague, and 's-Hertogenbosch (round 3), actively exploited the opportunities offered by the internet by setting up websites dedicated to the social relief policy³¹. These were also used for rendering account for the location decisions, particularly in Rotterdam, The Hague, and 's-Hertogenbosch. However, the penetration levels of these websites were rather low, and the direct rendering account to neighbourhood residents seemed to be more effective.

New media played almost no role as accountability mechanisms in the cases under consideration. Of course, social media functioned as important platforms for voicing public opposition (e.g., www.stophostelsdenbosch.nl). Local executives were often made a fool of and called to account online. Yet, social media generally did not function as platforms for accountability mechanisms in the same way as the traditional media because local executives refrained from taking part in online discussions. They were of the opinion that they should stay away from social media with regard to these controversial decisions. Two reasons come into play. First, they generally did not want to be confronted with the ordure that could be found online. Second, in the view of local executives new media lacked the potential for a proper conversation between them and citizens. In round 3 in 's-Hertogenbosch, however, the municipal website was used to enable citizens to comment on the locations under consideration in the sounding board phase. Also, Weterings frequently used Twitter to communicate about the hostels, but did not go so far as to use it to render account, though.

Overall, in all cases under consideration the media played an important role in the interaction between local executives and citizens. The role of (new) media as accountability mechanisms, however, was rather limited, with the exception of both of the 's-Hertogenbosch cases. Contrary to what is suggested by some scholars (see Bovens, 2007, p. 455), the role of local media as informal forums for political accountability was very limited in four of the six cases under study. The media did not form the forefront of the socio-political accountees (compare Commissie Toekomst Overheidscommunicatie, 2001, pp. 5, 12). This may also be explained by a decline in the availability of truly local media as a consequence of mergers (see, e.g., House of Commons Culture Media and Sport Committee, 2010, p. 7ff). Besides, most executives deliberately tried to render account to neighbourhood residents directly instead because they believed it to be a more effective way of rendering account. Mediated communication was avoided as much as possible (compare Hajer, 2009). The feasibility of this approach of direct communication was increased by the small geographic scale of the locational conflict and the existence of decentralised (Rotterdam) and deconcentrated (The Hague) municipal districts, and the close contacts between citizens and political-executives (Ghent, 's-Hertogenbosch (round 3)) and local-bureaucrats (Antwerp).

11.2.4 Flanders and the Netherlands compared

Because of the limited number of cases, a direct and extensive comparison of the findings from the Netherlands and Flanders is not feasible and should be approached with caution. Furthermore, the countries were selected on the basis of their close comparability, not because of their differences. Notwithstanding these facts, the inclusion of Flemish as well as Dutch cases did produce some interesting findings.

First, the within-country variation in accountability strategies in the Netherlands was as great as the between-country variation, maybe even greater. Although the inclusion of the Flemish cases did indeed broaden the variety in accountability strategies (see Chapter 4) because there were substantial differences in the accountability strategies in the Netherlands and Flanders, none of these differences coincided with the Dutch-Flemish boarder.

The resemblances may be even more striking than the differences, especially the fact that the effectiveness of the rendering of account in both countries sprung from the direct and informal rendering of account to councillors and neighbourhood residents. It can be hypothesised that the institutional difference in terms of monism versus dualism had no significant effect on political-executives' accountability strategies or the effectiveness thereof. This may be explained by the fact that in the Netherlands in practice the board-council relations were more monistic in nature than the country's formal institutional makeup suggests (see also Engels, 2008).

Second, the Flemish cases give reason to believe that Hofstede's power distance dimension of culture is an intermediary factor that affects the effectiveness of accountability strategies. Flemish citizens seemed less likely to challenge the reasonableness of location decisions, but also the accounts that were provided by political-executives in justification thereof. This produces an interesting paradox: a high power distance may reduce the relevance of the rendering of account, but increase its effectiveness: the reasonableness of the location decision is less likely to be challenged, but once an account is provided, it is more likely to create understanding.

11.3 A typology of accountability strategies

As has already been mentioned, the accountability strategies of local political-executives displayed considerable diversity in each of the six dimensions that were distinguished. Analysing the effectiveness of the accountability strategies in terms of regaining authority, there seems to be no accountability strategy for all seasons since the effectiveness of this was influenced by many contextual factors in each of the cases. Nonetheless, when trying to explain the effectiveness of the accountability strategies in terms of regaining authority, observations can be made that go beyond the individual cases. The current section develops a typology of accountability strategy by juxtaposing two distinctions that have proven relevant in the case studies in terms of regaining authority.

The first is the distinction between reactive and proactive accountability strategies, of which the latter were generally more effective, especially in the board-citizens accountability relationship. A proactive accountability strategy means rendering account in anticipation of being held to account. Such a strategy requires the early compilation of a clear narrative of why a particular location has been chosen and that explains and justifies the main considerations that motivated the location decisions. The Rotterdam fair share approach, for example, provided such a narrative, which was effective because it appealed to neighbourhood residents' sets of values. If such a narrative is proactively communicated, accountees' 'Why here?' questions can be answered quickly. The accountees may not believe that the answer was convincing, but at the very least their questions were recognised.

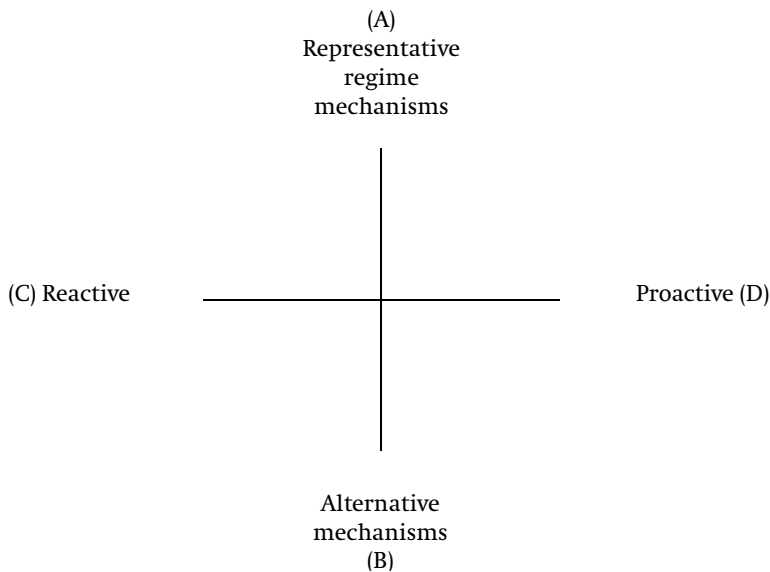
Second, an important distinction in the study of accountability strategies turned out to be the distinction between accountability mechanisms that belong to the regime of the traditional representative democracy, or 'representative regime mechanisms', and alternative mechanisms. In accountability strategies that primarily made use of the former, account was mainly rendered by political-executives to the council as a whole, and citizens were rendered account indirectly, that is, via the council. By contrast, the

rendering of account to citizens directly, in public meetings for example, constituted an alternative accountability mechanism. The case studies included a variety of communication channels through which such accountability mechanisms manifested themselves, including private meetings, e-mail, and letters.

Whether the informal rendering of account by executives to the council as a whole also constitutes such an alternative accountability mechanism is debatable since the representative accountability regime does not require the formal rendering of account. Yet, the direct rendering of account by individual executives to parts of the council, be it individual councillors, the coalition members or the councillors of one's own political party, does certainly constitute alternative accountability mechanisms. The direct rendering account of executives to other members of their political party also constitutes such a mechanism.

The juxtaposition of these two distinctions produces the typology of Figure 4.³² The typology can be used to characterise the accountability strategies of political-executives. Alderman Eugster's accountability strategy, for example, can be located in the top left hand corner (A/C) since it was reactive and mainly rested on formal, representative accountability mechanisms. By contrast, by taking accountability to the streets Rotterdam's political-executives utilised the potential of the bottom right hand corner (B/D). They proactively rendered account directly to groups of neighbourhood residents of different compositions. Other accountability strategies portrayed a rather

Figure 4. A typology of accountability strategies



complex mix. The Antwerp executives' accountability strategy, for example, covered the left hand side of the typology (A/C & B/C): it was mainly reactive but account was rendered to councillors and neighbourhood residents through the Municipal Council as well as directly. Alderman Weterings' accountability strategy covered all four corners, depending on which accountability relationship and which aspect of the decision is looked at. He rendered account for the procedural aspects of the location decision proactively through different mechanisms (A/D & B/D), but rendered account for the substantial aspect of the location decisions mainly reactively (A/C & B/C). This does, however, not explain the effectiveness of the accountability strategies *sec*; the accountability strategies still have to be compared to accountees' accountability demands.

Nevertheless, additional general hypotheses can be generated by comparing the effectiveness of the accountability strategies in terms of regaining authority. First, proactive strategies (A/D & B/D) were generally more effective in regaining authority than reactive strategies. A provisional explanation has already been provided in the previous section. Second, although representative regime mechanisms were not generally more effective than alternative mechanisms, the effectiveness of accountability strategies to a large extent seems to have resulted from utilising the possibilities of both types of mechanisms at the same time (A & B).

Alderman Van Alphen's accountability strategy, for example, was more effective because he rendered account informally and both directly and indirectly to neighbourhood residents (A), in addition to rendering account to the Municipal Council through formal mechanisms (B). The same goes for alderman Weterings, the Antwerp political-executives, and most of the Rotterdam political-executives. They rendered account through both representative and alternative mechanisms, which increased the effectiveness of their accountability strategies in terms of regaining authority. Ghent's political-executives could leave traditional mechanisms unattended to a large extent, because their authority was not challenged by the council. By contrast, the accountability strategy of alderman Eugster was less effective because she did not exploit the alternative accountability mechanisms in relation to both citizens and the Municipal Council.

The council being the highest power in local government, political-executives could not afford to neglect their accountability relationship with it. At the same time, rendering account to individual councillors, political party groups, the coalition, and to neighbourhood residents was also crucial for regaining authority. When the reasonableness of the location decisions was challenged by both social and political actors, as it was in most of the cases, effective accountability strategies covered the full right-hand side of the typology. This may be explained by the fact that such accountability strategies recognised the enduring relevance of the basic framework of the accountability regime of the representative democracy in a consensus context, as

well as the potential of alternative accountability mechanisms to counterbalance its shortcomings.

11.4 The relevance of the rendering of account

The previous sections have exclusively focused on the effectiveness of accountability strategies in regaining authority for controversial location decisions. They showed that the rendering of account had a moderate effect overall on the authority of political-executives. The rendering of account did not fully counter the challenge to authority that stemmed from the directive location decisions, but the impact was substantial nevertheless: most political-executives regained a considerable amount of authority through rendering account.

Up to now, though, no light has been shed on the relative impact of accountability strategies on the broader question of support for or opposition against the location decisions, as compared to the impact of other factors. This is of course a highly relevant question; if other factors are far more effective in gaining support than the rendering of account, it might not be wise for political-executives to focus on the latter at all. The current section provides an exploratory analysis of the relative impact of accountability strategies on the broader question of support, engaging in the complex relationship between social and political opposition and the challenge to authority.

With the exception of Delfshaven (Rotterdam), all cases that are included in this study included substantial initial public protest against location decisions. Social and political opposition were common throughout the cases. This is, of course, a logical consequence of the case-selection strategy. The manifestations, scope and intensity of the conflicts, however, differed. This thesis includes strong social opposition in 's-Hertogenbosch, for example, as well as in Prins Alexander, but also limited social opposition against most facilities in The Hague, and Ghent. The degree of political controversy also differed strongly. Whereas Ghent has seen no political debate concerning the Nieuwland location for the night shelter, the 's-Hertogenbosch Municipal Council fiercely debated the location decisions about hostels. The extent to which controversial decisions affected the position of the responsible alderman differed accordingly. Overall though, making controversial decisions in a directive way generally invokes substantial social and political opposition.

The case studies showed that overcoming social opposition is not only a matter of effectively explaining and justifying one's decisions. Many other factors were involved as well, some of which, but not all relate to perceptions of reasonableness of the location decisions.

Overcoming social opposition

Overall, four main factors have contributed to preventing or reducing the level of social opposition, that is, opposition from neighbourhood residents, resident associations, business owners, etc., throughout the cases.

First, there are good and bad locations. Given the historical background, Veerlaan in the Katendrecht peninsula was simply a bad location for accommodating a group of former prostitutes from the Keileweg streetwalkers' district, as the responsible executives eventually acknowledged (see the intermezzo in Section 4.2.1). Similarly, the Geert Grootestraat location in 's-Hertogenbosch was perceived by many as a very bad location. The Schijnpoortweg location in Antwerp, by contrast, was perceived as being a relatively good location by most. More suitable locations generally sparked less social opposition. At the same time there is an element of truth in Rotterdam district executive Van Zuuren's claim that "all locations are suitable", in the sense that human service facilities generally have few detrimental effects on the surrounding neighbourhood.³³ In that sense, there are few truly bad locations. This generally was not the perception of neighbourhood residents, however, at least not initially. Most location decisions were initially perceived as being unreasonable locations. Yet, some locations were perceived as being more unreasonable than others.

Second, all local governments included in this study have invested heavily in countering false beliefs about the human service facilities' clientele and informing their citizens about the characteristics and habits of the clients of the new facilities. The Dutch municipalities in this study used a two-stage approach. They first informed the cities' inhabitants in general about the goals of the social relief policy and the characteristics of the clientele, prior to the location decision. Secondly they informed neighbourhood residents in the neighbourhoods that were confronted with a facility about the clientele in a series of public meetings after the location decision was made. The Flemish municipalities informed neighbourhood residents *ex post* only.

When confronted with the location decisions, neighbourhood residents at first "had not a single clue what the clientele was like" (Informant 58, neighbourhood resident). "Owing to your lack of knowledge, you then naturally see syringes lying everywhere in the shrubs" (Informant 71, neighbourhood resident). But, in general, the information that was provided had the desired effect. Citizens were somewhat reassured after they received information about the clientele of the particular facility. Although some NIM-BY researchers claim that "knowledge generally works to polarize differences rather than collapse them" (Vittes *et al.*, 1993, pp. 125, also 126), the neighbourhood residents interviewed reported, with very few exceptions, that they were less anxious about the establishment of the facilities after it had become clear to them what the clientele was like, thanks to the information provided by care agencies and local government. Public education, it seems, can contribute to overcoming social opposition (see Schively, 2007).

It also affected neighbourhood residents' perceptions of the reasonableness of the location decisions. When neighbourhood residents perceived less risk of detrimental effects to their environment, their perceptions of the reasonableness of the location decision became more positive. The relative impact of this factor, it seems, was biggest in Rotterdam and The Hague.

Third, setting up, and having citizens participate in, management boards also contributed substantially to lessening social opposition against the location decisions because it allowed residents to express their worries and ensure the latter were taken seriously. In these management boards, neighbourhood residents could typically discuss opening hours of the facility, house rules, public safety related measures, the external appearance of buildings, and so forth. Such boards were established in all cases included in this study with the exception of Antwerp, where citizens' involvement in facility management was of a more informal nature. The functioning of these boards was generally evaluated positively by Informants (see also Maagdenberg *et al.*, 2008, pp. 38-39). However, it did not always prove easy for local governments to interest neighbourhood residents in participating in such a board, especially in neighbourhoods like the Valkenboskwartier in The Hague (Informant 52, senior administrator). And citizens' evaluations of the effectiveness of such boards, especially with regard to the role of citizens therein, were not always very positive (Maagdenberg *et al.*, 2008, pp. 38-39). Overall, though, the role of management boards in channelling social opposition was considerable (compare Vittes *et al.*, 1993, p. 126). The relative impact of this factor, it seems, was biggest in Rotterdam. In 's-Hertogenbosch (round 3) social opposition was also combated by extensively involving neighbourhood residents in the preparatory phases of the decision-making process.

The rendering of account for the location decisions, was a fourth factor through which executives overcame social opposition. Explaining and justifying the location decisions changed neighbourhood residents' perceptions of the reasonableness thereof, which in turn diminished social opposition.

Overcoming political opposition

The case studies showed that overcoming political opposition, that is, opposition from councillors, required almost monistic working relations between the board and the council. From the case studies it can be concluded that in location decision-making processes the backing of municipal councils was crucial for executives. Using a DAD approach local executives needed a clear mandate to autonomously decide on locations after the Municipal Council had decided on what the location criteria were. The 's-Hertogenbosch (rounds 1 & 2) case showed that such a mandate needed to be firmly grounded in councillors' commitment to letting executives do their job. In Antwerp such commitment found a breeding ground in the informal *cordon sanitaire* against

the Vlaams Belang, who opposed the Schijnpoortweg location decision. In The Hague alderman Van Alphen managed to establish such commitment by closely involving the Municipal Council in the preparatory phases of the location decision-making processes.

When political support was missing from the outset of the location decision-making process, or when councillors, particularly coalition members, openly expressed their dissatisfaction with the executives' location decisions, the latter's ability to overcome social and political opposition and enforce location decisions quickly faded (e.g., 's-Hertogenbosch (rounds 1 & 2)). In this process, municipal elections formed a major risk because they destabilised political support; their shadow preceded them.

Especially the Dutch cases that are included in this thesis indicated that the council-board relationship required constant maintenance by individual executives because even initially unanimous support from the council was no guarantee for success. This explains why aldermen such as Weterings and Van Alphen heavily invested in their relationship with the council, especially the coalition members. Aldermen, for example, often joined governing political parties' 'coalition meetings' and contacted individual councillors on a more informal basis to check on their support. The aim was to uphold the bastion in defence of social opposition and political opposition from non-coalition members.

[The alderman] asked me that once. Not so much to defend him personally, but: "You stand behind me on this issue, don't you?" (...) [The alderman] came to me, and said: "You will support the decision, won't you?" And that role I then take to heart, but I find: the moment that it does not go well, [then there must be room to hold him accountable]. The expectation 'you must always stand 100% behind the board' is always very high, and this applies here too. Sometimes it's very difficult.

(Informant 64, councillor)

But even under such a rather monistic relationship between the board and the council, the rendering of account proved relevant for overcoming political opposition. Although it was not the deciding factor, it was relevant for political-executives to render account for location decisions to the councils, as the Putsebocht sub-case from Rotterdam showed, for example. This was because perceptions of reasonableness were important for councillors as well, which were influenced by the rendering of account.

The relevance of the rendering of account for support

Social and political opposition to location decisions were, thus, influenced by a number of factors. Changes in accountees' perceptions of the reasonableness of the location decisions were just one of these factors. Table 27 provides a summarising overview

Table 27. An exploratory analysis of the relevance of the rendering of account for support

(Sub-)case	Relevance of the rendering of account
<i>Kapiteinsbuurt (Rotterdam)</i>	Very limited
<i>Putsebocht (Rotterdam)</i>	Substantial – high
<i>Sleephellingsstraat (Rotterdam)</i>	Limited – substantial
<i>Willem Ruyslaan (Rotterdam)</i>	Substantial
<i>Plantagelaan (Rotterdam)</i>	Substantial
<i>Wollefoppenweg (Rotterdam)</i>	Substantial
<i>Den Haag Onder Dak</i>	Limited – substantial
<i>'s-Hertogenbosch 1 & 2</i>	Substantial – high
<i>'s-Hertogenbosch 3</i>	Substantial
<i>Free Clinic (Antwerp)</i>	Limited
<i>Night shelter (Ghent)</i>	High

of the relative impact of the rendering of account on the support for the location decisions in each of the (sub-)cases.

The influence of the rendering of account, on social support in particular, was highest in Ghent, where the executives produced a convincing account of why the Nieuwland location was the best location for the night shelter, which was a very important factor in citizens' evaluation of the reasonableness of the location decision. By contrast, the rendering of account in Delfshaven had a very limited influence since neighbourhood residents already perceived the location decision as a very reasonable one. Similarly, the relevance of the rendering of account was relatively limited in Antwerp, where executives overcame social opposition mainly through adequately responding to neighbourhood residents' complaints. In all other cases, the rendering of account had substantial impact on citizens' perceptions of the reasonableness of the location decisions, which in turn affected support – positively (e.g., Putsebocht) or negatively (e.g., 's-Hertogenbosch (1 & 2)). Oudshoorn, for example, to a large extent managed to convince the District Council of the reasonableness to locate a facility in Putsebocht, thereby countering the political challenge to her authority and diminishing political opposition. Similarly, numerous Rotterdam executives managed to convince neighbourhood residents of the reasonableness of their location decisions by arguing in favour of the fair share approach.

The rendering of account is, thus, not a panacea for overcoming social and political opposition. Although the rendering of account had substantial impact in terms of countering the challenge to authority that stemmed from directive location decisions, its impact on social opposition was overall limited to substantial only. The case studies, though, showed that the rendering of account has some potential to counter social and political opposition. Through effectively rendering account, political-executives regained a substantial level of authority. This finding corroborates the main postulate

of this study: the rendering of account provides political-executives an opportunity to regain authority for directive leadership.

11.5 Conclusions

This last section gives summarising answers to the three empirical sub-questions and the main research question, which were introduced in Section 1.7. The fourth sub-question is the main focus of the next chapter.

a) How does the authority of local political-executive leaders develop when making directive decisions in a consensus context?

Although the case studies displayed considerable variety in terms of the extent to which the reasonableness of political-executives' location decisions was challenged, there was a substantial authority risk embedded in controversial location decision-making. The reasonableness of the human service facility location decisions was almost inherently challenged by both social and political actors, at least initially. But, over time, a considerable amount of authority was regained in most cases. The case studies, thus, showed that authority can be regained for directive decisions even in a consensus context. Yet, there was considerable variety in political-executives' ability to regain authority. Doing so required political-executives had a great deal of sensitivity to the socio-political context in which they operated.

b) Which accountability strategies do local political-executive leaders employ?

Political-executives employed a wide variety of accountability strategies when rendering account for their directive location decisions that differed across all six dimensions of accountability. Overall, four accountability relationships proved to be the most relevant; a) the direct, formal board-council accountability relationship, b) the direct, informal accountability relationship between the executives and individual councillors and their political party groups, c) the direct, informal board-citizens accountability relationship, and d) the informal and mutual board-media accountability relationship. The latter had strong influence on executives' authority only in 's-Hertogenbosch. The third is one of the more interesting since it constitutes a clear alternative to the traditional accountability mechanisms of the representative democracy. The direct rendering of account by executives to citizens, in public meetings for example, was crucial for regaining authority. In all four accountability relationships, the informal rendering of account was very important. A good part of the 'real' rendering of account took place behind the scenes.

c) What are the effects of executives' accountability strategies on their authority?

This thesis analysed the empirical adequacy of the claim that the rendering of account has the potential to contribute to someone's authority (Tyler, 2000, p. 122; see also Chapter 2). Based on the case studies, it can be concluded that the rendering of account indeed has such potential, but that at the same time it is not a panacea for overcoming social and political opposition. Although explainability has indeed become a criterion to judge executive conduct (see Shapiro *et al.*, 1994; Dijstelbloem & Holtslag, 2010, p. 53), making directive decisions in a consensus context required more than simply explaining and justifying one's decisions to different accountees.

Nevertheless, doing so did have considerable impact in terms of regaining authority. Authority can be regained through the effective rendering of account. Hence, the rendering of account can perform a bridging function between directive local leadership and the socio-political context of a consensus democracy, but only if accountability strategies are effective, that is, when political-executives manage to convince accountees of the reasonableness of their decisions. To the extent that the rendering of account performed such a function, its ability to do so, in turn, depended not only on the account provided, but also on who provided it, to whom it was provided, for what it was provided, how it was provided, and when it was provided. To regain authority, political-executives had to achieve congruence between their accountability strategies and accountees' accountability demands, the latter of which were contextually dependent.

Although there was no effective accountable leadership strategy for all seasons, there were some general patterns that made individualised, direct, proactive, and informal rendering of account to both social and political actors important in regaining authority. Still, the effective rendering of account required political-executives had considerable sensitivity to the socio-political context in which they operated, to the accountability demands of accountees, and to the politics of accountability, that is, the political-strategic dimension of accountability practices.

Summarised answer to the main research question

This thesis set out to answer the question: how does the rendering of account influence local political-executive leaders' authority in the case of directive decisions in a consensus context? The findings, which were obtained through a comparative case study of six cases of directive decision-making in the field of human service facility siting, showed that the rendering of account can affect accountees' perceptions of the reasonableness of political-executive leaders' decisions. Through explaining and justifying their decisions, accountors generally created understanding for these among accountees, which positively influenced their authority.

Success, however, was not self-evident; not all political-executives were equally effective in countering the challenge to their authority that stemmed from their directive location decisions through rendering account. Regaining authority through explaining and justifying decisions required developing convincing accounts that meshed with accountees' values and belief systems, and that honoured the accountability demands of accountees, which were contextually dependent.

The comparative analysis showed that the effectiveness of political-executives' accountability strategies generally increased when they utilised the potential of the accountability mechanisms that formed alternatives for those of the traditional regime of the representative democracy, when they recognised the importance of the direct board-citizens accountability relationship and of informal accountability mechanisms, and when they rendered account proactively. Still, making accountable leadership work required political-executives displayed a great deal of sensitivity to the socio-political context in which they operated.

In summary, the main findings of this thesis are:

- A) There is a strategic element to accountability. Political-executives can regain a considerable amount of authority for directive decisions in a consensus context.
- B) The effective rendering of account furthers public understanding for decisions in terms of perceptions of reasonableness, which means a considerable amount of authority can be regained, but the rendering of account does not necessarily increase social and political support to the same extent.
- C) The effectiveness of accountability strategies in terms of regaining authority depends on the extent to which the account provided meshes with different accountees' values and belief systems and the extent to which the accountant honours accountees' accountability demands.
- D) Although the effectiveness of accountability strategies is context dependent individualised, direct, proactive, and informal rendering of account to both social and political actors were generally important aspects of effective accountability strategies in terms of regaining authority.

The next chapter provides a further reflection on these findings. It delineates the most important implications of the answer to the main research question for the two main bodies of literature this thesis aims to contribute to, that is, public leadership studies and public accountability theory.

12

Implications for public leadership studies, public accountability theory, and practice

The previous chapters have analysed six cases of directive leadership by local political executives in the field of human service facility siting. In Chapters 5 through to 10 the effects of local executives' accountability strategies on their authority were analysed in each case individually. Chapter 11 provided a comparative analysis of the cases and presented the main empirical findings of this thesis. The current chapter compares the findings that were presented in Chapter 11 to the two main bodies of literature this thesis aims to contribute to, that is, public leadership studies and public accountability theory as elaborated in Chapters 1 through to 3. It assesses the empirical results' main implications for theory. The focal question of the current chapter is the fourth sub-question posed in Chapter 1: what can be learned from the analysis with regard to both public leadership studies and public accountability theory? The chapter concludes with the main implications for practice.

Table 28. Overview of the main findings' implications for theory and practice

Implications for public leadership studies	
A)	Directive decision-making in the form of Decide-Announce-Defend can be a viable approach to controversial decision-making in a consensus context.
B)	Directive leadership in a consensus democracy proves to be effective only when it respects the checks and balances posed to it by its consensus-oriented socio-political context.
C)	In controversial decision-making processes in a consensus context, regaining authority for directive leadership requires a variant of 'accountable leadership' (<i>verantwoordend leiderschap</i>) that honours accountees' accountability demands.
Implications for public accountability theory	
D)	'Accountability' should be perceived more as a practice of communicative interaction, complementary to being perceived as an institutional framework.
E)	The understanding of public accountability practices could be improved by extending existing conceptual frameworks for analysing public accountability with a substantive dimension and a timing dimension: with what arguments and when do accountors render account?
F)	Accountability studies should pay special attention to the role accountors play in shaping the accountability arrangements in which they operate rather than to the role of accountees alone, and also to the expectations held by accountees and the evaluative standards they apply in judging the adequacy of the way in which account is rendered.
G)	Accountability studies should pay special attention to informal, concealed accountability practices.
Implications for practice	
H)	Political-executives can regain authority for directive decisions in a consensus context, but the feasibility thereof hinges on local political-executives' skills and willingness to make accountable leadership work.

12.1 Implications for public leadership studies

This thesis revolved around the paradox of democratic leadership, which Kane, Patapan, and 't Hart aptly summarised by saying that democracy and leadership appear to be mutually exclusive properties: “the more democratic leaders lead from the front, the less democratic they appear; the more they act like good democrats, the less they seem like true leaders” (Kane *et al.*, 2009, p. 299; see also Ruscio, 2008; Hendriks & Karsten, forthcoming 2013). As leadership is called for even in consensus democracies nonetheless, the current study set out to better understand this leadership-democracy nexus by studying how directive leadership fares in a contemporary consensus democracy context, with a particular focus on the role of public accountability therein. This section delineates and discusses three main implications of this thesis' findings for public leadership studies. The aim of each of these implications is to deepen understanding of what authoritative local leadership in a contemporary consensus context amounts to. In other words, they deepen the understanding of whether and how directive leadership styles and consensus democracy can be reconciled in practice through the rendering of account.

12.1.1 The viability of directive leadership in a consensus context

Current public leadership theories claim that consensus democracies provide an 'unfavourable biotope' for strong political leadership ('t Hart, 2005). Directive leadership and consensus democracy do not go well together, leading authors argue, because this type of democracy broadens the involvement in decision-making as widely as possible and is characterised by a practice of consultation, compromise, and consensus seeking, whereas directive leadership is characterised by its opposites (see Andeweg, 2000, p. 512; Lijphart, 1999, pp. 31-47; Hendriks, 2010, pp. 66-85; also Chapter 1). In local government it would appear that this generally assumed tension is heightened by a general trend throughout Western Europe towards a model of local governance in which citizen participation in decision-making is an essential element (Heinelt, 2010; Loughlin, Hendriks & Lidström, 2011; see also Denters & Rose, 2005; Chapter 1). It would therefore appear that in a contemporary local consensus context directive leadership is particularly infeasible.

Yet, the case studies showed that some local executives, at least the majority of those interviewed, believe that public decision-making sometimes requires directive leadership, at least as regards controversial location decisions in the field of human service facility siting. In the cases that were analysed, the executives involved made directive decisions, believing that there was a justification for acting contrary to the preferences of neighbourhood residents (see also Strøm, 2000, p. 268).

Leaders' motives were twofold. First, there was the pragmatic consideration that respecting citizens' preferences unmediated, or having citizens participate directly in the actual decision-making about locations were seen by executives to threaten the effectiveness of the implementation of social relief policies by seriously reducing the opportunities for finding locations and also intensifying locational conflict. NIMBYism, they feared, would effectively prevent the necessary facilities from being established (see, e.g., Van Alphen, 2007; see also Singelenberg, 2005; Ministry of Housing Spatial Planning and the Environment, 2007).

Second, there was the ideological consideration that local executives did not want the preferences of a minority, *in casu* neighbourhood residents, to triumph over the interests of the facilities' clientele or the 'common good'. These reasons motivated the executives' decision to opt for a Decide-Announce-Defend approach in which citizens had no role in the decision-making about locations, with the partial exception of 's-Hertogenbosch round 3. The influence of municipal councils on concrete location decisions was also limited, although it varied somewhat.

In the cases under consideration, the local executive boards, *de facto* individual executives, bore almost exclusive responsibility for the location decisions. They autonomously decided between alternative locations in a directive manner. The DAD approach that was adopted entailed that the executives made the location decisions behind closed doors, which they tried to keep shut until after the location decision. Executives attempted to control the streams of communication by a) only communicating the location decisions to various accountees *ex post*, b) in a strict order, c) as directly as possible, and d) within the shortest possible time frame (with the partial exception of the Flemish cases). To a large extent they succeeded in doing so (compare Hajer, 2009, pp. 9-11), but they were vulnerable to leaks, as is illustrated by the Wollefoopenweg sub-case, the Antwerp case, and the Spoorwijk in The Hague.

In addition, in all six cases the leadership style of the executives radiated directive leadership. The political-executives stood firm and held on to their location decisions, even in the light of occasionally fierce social and political opposition. Opposers were confronted with headstrong executives maintaining that the decision had already been made definitively. As a consequence, neighbourhood residents felt ambushed by the location decisions they opposed and the reasonableness of which they significantly challenged in the majority of cases.

Yet, the directive DAD approach taken by the executives proved effective in terms of enforcing the location decisions and realising the intended facilities, with the exception of round 2 in 's-Hertogenbosch, where the executive board *de facto* was forced to redo the decision-making. Although the level of initial social and political resistance in some cases was substantial, over time public and political acceptance reached a level that sufficed for the execution of the social relief policies. More importantly for the

current study, most executives countered the challenges to their authority that they faced in these dossiers with considerable success. They regained a considerable amount of authority by convincing accountees of the reasonableness of their decisions. That is, they were able to 'defend' their choices, which was part of the DAD approach, at least to the extent that in time pivotal groups of accountees perceived the location decisions as reasonable ones.

The executives held that the effectiveness of their policies in terms of realising the facilities has benefitted from taking a directive approach to the decision-making rather than a participative, inclusive approach. Unfortunately, the empirical data that were analysed for the current study do not permit testing this hypothesis since no participatory decision-making processes were studied. It can be established, however, that in the case of controversial decision-making in the field of human service facilities, directive leadership and consensus democracy can go together reasonably well since the executives' conduct was effective both in terms of enforcing the location decisions and in terms of regaining authority.

Hence, directive decision-making can be a viable approach to controversial decision-making, even in a consensus context. It can be effective in terms of output, and to the extent that executives' authority is initially challenged it can be regained, at least partially. Directive local leadership is thus not categorically rejected in consensus democracies, even though there is an inherent tension between the two. The result of the plausibility probe for the reconcilability of directive decision-making and consensus democracy (see Section 4.2.1), thus, is positive: the two can be reconciled in reasonable harmony.

These findings challenge the belief that there is a general trend towards a contemporary local governance, in which citizen participation in decision-making is an essential element (Heinelt, 2010; see also Denters & Rose, 2005). They also challenge the belief that participative leadership is preferred to directive leadership (see Bass & Bass, 2008, p. 459) and that Decide-Announce-Defend approaches do no longer work (compare Walesh, 1999). Furthermore, they challenge the belief that directive leadership and consensus democracy are irreconcilable.

It could be hypothesised that the viability of directive decision-making in the case of controversial location decisions originated from an alleged democratic nature of directive leadership itself: was the directive leadership that was shown not democratic in itself? After all, the local executives involved believed that public, democratic decision-making in this case itself required directive leadership. This belief was motivated by democratic considerations such as the fact that the local executives involved did not want the preferences of a minority, *in casu* neighbourhood residents, to triumph over the interests of the facilities' clientele. Protecting the interests of minorities is after all considered by some to be an important democratic quality (De Tocqueville, 2000;

Mill, 2003). Likewise, it would be possible to hypothesise that the location decisions were democratically legitimate since they honoured the traditional representative regime. From the perspective of consensus democracy, however, the decision-making under consideration should still not be regarded as being thoroughly democratic since the executives involved did not aim at broadening the involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making, but by contrast opted for a decisive, non-participative approach. The decision-making was perceived by those involved as thoroughly directive, not as particularly democratic. The effectiveness of the directive approach in a consensus context, thus, did not primarily result from possible inherent democratic qualities of a particular type of directive leadership. Rather, it resulted from local political-executives' abilities to make directive leadership work, even in a consensus context.

- A) Directive decision-making in the form of Decide-Announce-Defend can be a viable approach to controversial decision-making in a consensus context.

12.1.2 A closer look at 'directive leadership' in a consensus context

Hence, the cases show that directive leadership can be viable in a consensus context. At the same time the 'directive leadership' assertion deserves considerable qualifying for at least three reasons. First, the informal involvement of councillors in the location decision-making was considerable. Second, elements of consensus decision-making were found in the board-citizens relationship. Third, the influence of third-party actors, public and semi-public, was substantial as well. Each of these aspects will be discussed in this section.

Councillors' involvement in the decision-making

Overall, councils' formal power over the location decisions was very limited since the decisions were the exclusive responsibility of the municipal boards. Yet, the councils' *de facto* involvement in the location decision-making was substantial. It operated through two different mechanisms. First, the preparatory involvement of the representative councils in particular the The Hague and 's-Hertogenbosch cases (round 2 & 3), and also the Rotterdam case, was considerable. In these cases, the councils made preparatory arrangements with their boards in the form of policy frameworks that laid down the outline of the decision-making process as well as the selection criteria. This substantially reduced executives' room to manoeuvre, although they still made autonomous location decisions.³⁴

Second, the informal involvement of the councils in the actual decision-making was substantial in at least three cases (The Hague, 's-Hertogenbosch round 2, and Ghent). Although formally the location decisions in, for example, The Hague were the

exclusive responsibility of the board, with the council only scrutinising the location decisions *ex post*, there was more to the picture than met the eye since the board took council support for concrete locations into consideration when making the decisions, which inspired the additional search for locations outside the city centre. Such influence surpassed the formally dualistic nature of the relationship between the board and council. Likewise, under the monistic relationship in Ghent, coalition members were more directly involved in the decision-making. In practice, the councils' informal influence was thus substantial, even though the location decisions were generally portrayed as an exclusive responsibility of the boards and the policy frameworks that were agreed upon provided much less influence for the councils. The fact that in practice councillors' involvement was substantial, therefore, qualifies as an element of consensual decision-making under an otherwise directive approach.

The fact that councils were more closely involved than what the formal and agreed upon division of tasks provided for can be explained by the fact that although the location decisions were the responsibility of the boards, the councils maintained general control over the composition of the boards. Under the *vertrouwensregel* the boards as a whole, as well as individual political-executives, require the tacit support of the municipal councils (Derksen & Schaap, 2010, p. 139). This meant that the councils could force aldermen to resign for whatever reason. This is because the council is formally the highest power in local government and the board is elected by the council. As a consequence, maintaining the council's support for concrete locations was crucial in practice (see, amongst others, The Hague and 's-Hertogenbosch round 2 & 3). Political-executives were, thus, kept in check by basic institutional characteristics of the consensus context in which they operated (see also Section 1.4). In The Hague, 's-Hertogenbosch round 3, and to a lesser extent Ghent, this resulted in close cooperation between the board and the council. Overall, the working relations between the council and the board were more monistic than the formal institutional regime suggests, especially in the Dutch cases. The controversial decision-making included in this study was thus of a more consensual nature than the 'directive decision-making' label suggests because of the formal and informal involvement of municipal councils.

Citizen participation

In relation to citizens, however, the decision-making remained essentially directive. Here too, though, the 'directive decision-making' label has to be nuanced somewhat.

Elements of consensual decision-making can be found in the various board-citizens relationships. 's-Hertogenbosch (round 3) is the most obvious example because citizens played an advisory role in assessing the suitability of alternative locations before the location decisions were made. Other forms of citizen participation can be found throughout the other cases as well, such as the sounding board in 's-Hertogenbosch

(round 2) and the management boards. Although these boards were not concerned with the location decisions as such, they played a crucial role in the implementation phase after the location decisions were made. The management boards functioned as a classic mechanism for consensus decision-making between local government, neighbourhood residents, care agencies, the police, and other actors involved because in the boards, reaching a consensus on matters of implementation was often one of the core principles (e.g., in 's-Hertogenbosch, see Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, 2011a).

The directive leadership style, thus, was not that directive in the sense that local executives did not bother with neighbourhood residents' interests at all. This can be explained by the fact that although all executives included in this study held that social opposition was unavoidable and that broad support from neighbourhood residents was unfeasible, and that they for that reason aimed for acceptance rather than support, they all acknowledged that the location decisions required a minimum backing by neighbourhood residents and councillors. Yet, there was no participation of citizens in the location decision-making itself.

Third party involvement

In addition to councillors and neighbourhood residents, a number of public and semi-public actors had substantial influence on the location decisions. Most notably, these included care agencies, housing associations, and the police. Although these actors did not have a formal role in the location decision, their advice often had considerable influence on the final locations. The boards' autonomy remained intact, which is illustrated, for example, by the fact that the board deviated from police advice in 's-Hertogenbosch (round 1), or acted contrary to the preferences of the Free Clinic in Antwerp. But, gaining third parties' approval for locations overall was important for the local executives involved. This qualifies as a third reason why the 'directive leadership' assertion deserves considerable qualifying.

Directive leadership in a consensus context: conclusions

Thus, while leaving room for directive leadership, consensus democracy at the same time puts considerable constraints on such directive leadership. Directive leadership was conditioned by its consensual environment (see also Bondel, 1987, p. 7; Kane & Patapan, 2012). The executives included in this study were highly dependent on the cooperation of other actors, particularly the municipal councils. Although they had the formal power to autonomously decide on locations, they were still highly dependent on others. The effectiveness of political-executives' directive approaches cannot be separated from the fact that they entailed several elements of consensual decision-making, both formal and informal.

Authoritative leadership in consensus democracies thus proved to be a particular variant of directive leadership that took its consensus-oriented political-institutional environment into consideration. On the one hand, there certainly was room for political-executives to manoeuvre and their conduct mattered (see also 't Hart, 2000; Ruscio, 2008). On the other, the strong affinity between consensus democracy and less directive forms of leadership manifested itself in the formal and informal constraints that were put on political-executives' abilities to exercise directive leadership.

The positive result for the plausibility probe for the reconcilability of directive decision-making and consensus democracy is thus a conditional result. To be enforceable, the directive location decisions, which from the perspective of representative democracy may have been perfectly legitimate and were perfectly legal, required an additional minimum of direct popular acceptance in the neighbourhoods concerned. Consensus democracy, thus, put considerable constraints on local leaders' attempts to exhibit directive leadership (see also Andeweg, 2000; Goldsmith & Larsen, 2004; Hendriks & Karsten, forthcoming 2013).

Based on the interviews with neighbourhood residents, it can be hypothesised that this paradox of directive leadership and consensus democracy is also embedded in the call for leadership that can be found in both the Netherlands and Flanders (see Sections 1.2 and 4.2.1). This call is of a particularly ambiguous nature. The citizens interviewed expressed a demand for courage, pluck, vision, decisiveness, and assertiveness, but at the same time wanted their leaders to be highly responsive to their interests (e.g., Informants 20, 54, and 71). They recognised the legitimacy of the representative democracy and of directive decision-making, but at the same time claimed the right to oppose the otherwise legitimate decisions it produced. This could be interpreted in terms of individuals' Hobbesian right to fight if the sovereign fails to adequately provide their safety (Hobbes, 1996 [1651], Ch. 16). Neighbourhood residents often feared that, with the establishment of a human service facility, their safety was at issue (Farrell, 2005; also the majority of neighbourhood residents interviewed), which allegedly allowed them to exercise their right to resist the decision. It seems, though, that this paradox results mostly from ambiguity within the call for directive leadership itself. Informants called for directive leadership, but not for directive leadership that acted against their wishes. Consider:

We need political-executives with vision, with charisma, people who can just give guidance to a country. (...) [but concerning the facility, NK:] It seemed as though it could only be cautiously put anywhere in the city via secret means. (...) Why can a political-executive not just act out of character and say: dear citizen, we do this for you, will you join the deliberation?

(Informant 20, neighbourhood resident)

Neighbourhood residents acknowledged the legitimacy of the political-executives as the final decision-makers and appreciated their decisiveness, but at the same time felt free to challenge the resulting location decision when it was not to their liking (e.g., Informants 54, 71, and 72).

When opting for a directive approach in a consensus context, political-executives will thus have to negotiate a socio-political context that is highly ambiguous towards directive leadership, in relation to both municipal councils and neighbourhood residents. They are granted the room to autonomously decide on locations by municipal councils, but at the same time are strictly controlled by the latter and are dependent on their support. A minimum of social support is essential, too. Consensus democracy, thus, maintains its influence on leadership and constrains directive leadership. Local executives will therefore have to display considerable sensitivity to the socio-political context in which they operate. They must walk a fine line between exhibiting the sort of directive leadership that they deem appropriate and imposing the sort of authoritarian rule that intensifies locational conflict and leads to social and political challenges to authority, especially in a consensus context. Making directive decisions in a consensus context, thus, strongly appeals to political-executives' socio-political skills and competences.

B) Directive leadership in a consensus democracy proves to be effective only when it respects the checks and balances posed on it by its consensus-oriented socio-political context.

12.1.3 Political-executive leadership as 'accountable leadership'

The case studies showed that the perceived authority of executives for a substantial part depended on the extent to which they managed to successfully explain and justify their decisions to accountees, that is, the extent to which they managed to convince the latter of the reasonableness of their location decisions. As regards directive decision-making in the field of controversial location decisions, explainability is thus indeed a criterion citizens use to judge executive conduct (see Dijkstelbloem & Holtslag, 2010, p. 53). Chapter 11 has shown that the effectiveness of executives' accountability strategies, in turn, depended on the extent to which political-executives managed to satisfy the accountability demands of different accountees. As Chapter 1 hypothesised, the rendering of account can perform a bridging function between directive local leadership and the socio-political context of a consensus democracy. The case studies showed that the feasibility of regaining authority for controversial location decisions increased when political-executives positioned themselves as 'accountable leaders' and recognised the importance of direct and informal accountability mechanisms. At the

same time accountability strategies were effective in terms of convincing accountees of the reasonableness of their directive decisions only when political-executives managed to produce accounts that meshed with the latter's contextually dependent values and belief systems. Effective directive leadership in controversial decision-making processes in a consensus context is thus a type of 'accountable leadership' that honours accountees' accountability demands. Viable directive leadership in a consensus context is thus of the selling/defending type rather than of the coercing type (see also Bass & Bass, 2008, p. 460).

These findings cast doubt on the postulate put forward by organisational theorists like Herbert Simon "that, if authorities must continually explain and justify their decisions, their ability to effectively manage is diminished" (Tyler & Degoe, 1996, p. 332). In contrast, this study argues that if contemporary political-executives want to regain authority, which seems to be a prerequisite for effective public management, at least in the case of controversial location decisions, they will have to explain and justify their decisions effectively. It may not be necessary to do so continually since the *ex post* rendering of account has proved effective in regaining authority in some cases (e.g., 's-Hertogenbosch (round 3)), but it should be recognised that the substantive rendering of account is an important aspect of contemporary executives' political repertoires (also Shapiro *et al.*, 1994). Making authoritative decision calls upon political-executives' abilities to reason publicly (Ruscio, 2008).

Hence, the rendering of account is at the core of public decision-making by political-executives (see Commissie Toekomst Overheidscommunicatie, 2001, p. 13). So it seems that the "Machiavellian trade-off between 'smart' (high impact) versus accountable (trustworthy) leadership" that is proposed by 't Hart (2011, p. 328) does not necessarily apply, at least not in the case of controversial decision-making, because accountable leadership can increase the effectiveness of leaders' conduct in terms of realising facilities, that is, impact. This can be explained by the fact that accountees did not only expect accountors to be accountable, but also to actively render account (Dijstelbloem & Holtslag, 2010, pp. 31-32; see also Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2009).

It is plausible that in this respect public leaders differ from their private sector counterparts for the reason that the legitimacy of public decision-makers ultimately rests with their constituents. Public leaders may be subject to scrutiny more so than their private counterparts (Mulgan, 2003, p. 202). Since the former legitimate public rule, the effectiveness of public rule, other than of private rule, depends on the extent to which public leaders are able to convince citizens of the reasonableness of their decisions, which requires that they convincingly explain and justify their decisions. Alternatively, it could be hypothesised that Simon and others have measured public perceptions of reasonableness rather than private ones, since Bass (1967) has found

that coercion furthers only public acceptance, whereas explanation and justification of decisions furthers both public and private acceptance (see also Easton, 1975).

The case studies showed that having one identifiable leader who pulls accountability towards himself is effective both in terms of enforcing location decisions and regaining authority because this approach is well-appreciated by accountees, as long as it is carefully executed. Individualised leadership increased the recognisability, accessibility, and accountability of the executives, as well as the effectiveness of the rendering of account (see also Borraz & John, 2004). It ensured that the controversial decisions had a 'face'; that they were represented by a recognisable accountant. The local executives included in this study deliberately positioned themselves as political leaders as part of their accountability strategy, countering the institutional complexity that obscures who is accountable to whom for what (see McGarvey, 2001, p. 23), and which threatens the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms (Bovens, 1998, p. 279; Mulgan, 2003, pp. 188-225; Papadopoulos, 2003, p. 481; Wollman, 2008). This provided a satisfactory answer to accountees' accountability demands. This finding corroborates Greasley and John's (2011, pp. 241-243) recent postulate that citizens appreciate the extra clarity that directive leadership offers in terms of responsibility and accountability.

Consensus democracies, thus, leave room for and, in the case of controversial decision-making, may even benefit from directive leadership in terms of accountability.

- C) In controversial decision-making processes in a consensus context, regaining authority for directive leadership requires a variant of 'accountable leadership' (*verantwoordend leiderschap*) that honours accountees' accountability demands.

12.1.4 Main implications for public leadership studies

To sum up, directive leadership can be a viable approach to controversial decision-making in a consensus context. At the same time directive leadership proved to be effective only when it respected the consensual nature of its socio-political context. The foregoing analysis suggests that being an accountable leader and rendering account are important aspects of contemporary local public leadership in consensus democracies, at least as regards regaining authority for controversial location decisions. The case studies showed that explainability, that is, the extent to which political-executive leaders were able to convince accountees of the reasonableness of their decisions, was one of the criteria accountees used to judge executive conduct. Consequently, the rendering of account allowed executives that made directive decisions to regain author-

ity in a context that was rather hostile towards such directive leadership when they convincingly rendered account in a way that met accountees' accountability demands.

12.2 Implications for public accountability theory

From the outset, this study took a leader-centric perspective in evaluating the effectiveness of public accountability mechanisms by conceptualising 'effectiveness' in terms of accountors' ability to regain authority for directive decisions. This perspective has been introduced into accountability studies as a way of evaluating the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms only recently (e.g., Bovens & Schillemans, 2009, p. 32; Bovens *et al.*, 2008, p. 239; see also Chapter 2 and 3). The current study elaborates on this through a detailed analysis of the practice of local leadership accountability in the case of controversial decision-making, taking the perspective of local executives. The previous chapter has identified the main empirical findings. The current section discusses their implications for the body of literature on public accountability as it was outlined in the Chapters 1 through to 3. It distinguishes four main implications for the study of accountability practices.

12.2.1 Rendering account as a communicative practice

Traditionally, the focus of accountability studies has been on accountability relationships perceived as social relationships that constitute mechanisms through which accountees hold accountors to account (e.g., Mashaw, 2006; Dowdle, 2006b; Bovens, 2007). These mechanisms are perceived of as institutionalised practices in which the accountability relationships have reified. These social relationships manifest themselves in established practices that govern the conduct of accountees and accountors. Many of those mechanisms have taken on a formal nature as they have been laid down in laws and regulations that prescribe a state of accountability (see Mulgan, 2003, p. 10; also Section 2.1.1), that is, a state in which a particular accountor is accountable to one or more accountees. Legal accountability to courts is one of the most concrete examples (see Romzek, 2000; Bovens, 2007).

Without denying the importance of the institutional framework of accountability, the current study found that accountability had important communicative aspects that were not sufficiently captured by institutional analyses of accountability mechanisms. These aspects, which were crucial elements of accountability relationships in practice, were more accurately captured by an alternative conception of accountability that perceived the practice of accountability as one of communicative interaction. Such a conception of accountability was derived from the work of Day and Klein (1987), Dubnick (2003), and Black (2008).

In the case studies both accountors and accountees stressed the importance of the deliberative nature of the rendering of account. In order for accountability to be effective, accountees needed to be given sufficient opportunity to ask their questions and accountors needed to be sufficiently able to render account in response to these, preferably proactively. Accountors and accountees needed to be able to truly interact with each other as regards controversial decisions; being able to have 'a proper conversation' with accountees was very important for executives (e.g., The Hague and Rotterdam). In practice, accountors and accountees' abilities to exchange their views were, though, sometimes hampered by mutual hostility and intense emotions (e.g., 's-Hertogenbosch round 1, Ghent). Executives who were not on speaking terms with their accountees, literally, were not able to effectively render account (e.g., 's-Hertogenbosch round 1 & 2). Likewise, it was more difficult for accountees to voice their accountability demands and to pose their questions. Neighbourhood residents intrinsically valued being able to have a proper conversation with their executives, even when the former opposed the location decision (e.g., Informants 20, 71, and 72).

The desire for proper dialogue gave rise to several government measures, in Rotterdam for example, which, amongst others, aimed at improving the effectiveness of accountability. These included separating different interest groups, reducing the number of participants in public meetings, having one-on-one conversations with individual accountees, and using interpreters.

It is widely recognised in the public accountability literature that deliberation between accountors and accountees is an essential element of accountability, even among those hesitant to conceptualise accountability in terms of a dialogue between accountees and accountors (e.g., Mulgan, 2000, pp. 569-570; Bovens, 2007). The latter authors, however, are cautious not to portray accountability relationships as a dialogue because they believe accountability relationships are unequal by nature since the accountee can impose sanctions on the accountor (Mulgan, 2000, p. 570). The latter criticism has an element of truth: accountability relationships are unequal. Yet, perceiving of accountability practices as communicative practices as such does not imply that the dialogue between accountees and accountors is one between equals. Still, effective accountability between hierarchically related actors required a proper dialogue. Such a dialogue was not *herrschaftsfrei* (Habermas, 1981), but it was of a communicative nature. Effective accountability rested on accountees' and accountors' abilities to communicate. Leaders' communicative capacities, specifically in terms of rendering account, were thus crucial (see also Bergström *et al.*, 2012, p. 122).

The current analysis suggests that perceiving accountability as a dialogue between accountors and accountees increases the understanding of the interactive and communicative practice of accountability because it draws attention to what hampers and what fosters proper dialogue between accountors and accountees.

Notwithstanding the politics of accountability and the influence of power on the practice of accountability, public leadership accountability is therefore best captured by studies that perceive accountability practices as praxes of communicative interaction within their political-institutional context. Rather than studying the institutional frameworks of accountability, such studies should perceive accountability mechanisms as interactive practices, in which both accountees and accountors develop political repertoires through interaction. Other than some scholars argue, a focus on accountability does not require a focus on “the (formal) institutional mechanisms of local democracy” (Haus & Sweeting, 2006, p. 274).

Evidently, the communicative practice of accountability takes shape against, and is influenced by its institutional background – *in casu* the regime of the representative democracy. This conception of accountability is therefore not aimed at replacing existing conceptions that focus more emphatically on institutional frameworks, but rather functions as a complementary perspective.

D) ‘Accountability’ should be perceived more as a practice of communicative interaction, complementary to being perceived as an institutional framework.

The application of such an alternative conception of accountability in this thesis has revealed two possible additions to existing conceptual frameworks for analysing public accountability: a substantive dimension and a timing dimension. These will be discussed separately in the next section.

12.2.2 Extending conceptual frameworks: ‘the account’ and timing

The ‘account’ in rendering account

Current conceptual frameworks of public accountability distinguish four dimensions of accountability: who rendered account, to whom, for what, and how? (Mulgan, 2003, pp. 22-30; Mashaw, 2006, p. 118; Bovens, 2007). The last question is generally interpreted in terms of which accountability mechanisms are in place to hold an accountor to account: how are accountors accountable (e.g., Mulgan, 2003, p. 23)?

This interpretation is closely related to the conceptualisation of ‘accountability’ as a state of affairs in which an accountability relationship exists between two actors, which in turn is constituted by the fact that the accountee can require the accountor to render account (see Chapter 2). The practice of accountability, however, not only comprises ‘accountability’ but also ‘the rendering of account’ as conceptualised in Chapter 2. The inclusion of the latter in the current study’s conception of account-

ability highlighted an important aspect of the ‘How?’ dimension of accountability, in addition to the ‘Through which accountability mechanisms do accountors render account?’ aspect, namely: ‘How do accountors render account, that is, which types of explanations and justifications are used in the rendering of account?’. In other words: what kind of account is provided (see also Mulgan, 2000, p. 569)?

The latter question deals with the substantive dimension of the accounts that are provided. Based on the work of Fischer (2003), four types of arguments were distinguished that were used to analyse the accountability strategies of local executives: technical, situational, societal, and ideological argumentations. These were used to interpret the substantive orientation of executives’ accounts. Of course, other typologies could have been used as well.

It turned out that the differences between accountability strategies were substantial: some executives provided a predominately situational justification for their location decision (e.g., The Hague, Ghent, ’s-Hertogenbosch (round 3)), whereas others provided mainly ideological arguments (e.g., Wollefoffenweg). Yet others combined different types of argumentations (e.g., Plantagelaan). The effectiveness of these strategies also differed strongly. Chapter 11 has explained the differences in the effectiveness of these strategies in terms of the extent to which political-executives honoured the accountability demands of different accountees.

Current conceptual frameworks lack the ability to capture the influence of different types of accounts on the effectiveness of accountability strategies since they do not analyse the content of the accounts that are provided in terms of the type of argumentation (compare Mulgan, 2003, pp. 22-30; Mashaw, 2006, p. 118; Bovens, 2007). Therefore, the understanding of accountability practices could be improved if a dimension of substantive argumentations is added to existing conceptual frameworks for analysing public accountability: which types of explanations and justifications are used when rendering account?

The importance of timing

As discussed in Chapter 2, leading authors in the field of public accountability studies hold that accountability is necessarily retrospective in operation (e.g., Bovens *et al.*, 2008; see also Mulgan, 2003, pp. 18-19). The current study respects this conception of accountability.

This does not mean, however, that timing is not an important dimension of accountability strategies. The case studies showed that there are at least three timing aspects of the rendering of account that should be considered when studying the practice of public accountability: a) ‘Do executives render account reactively or proactively?’, b) ‘In what order do executives render account to different accountees?’, and c) ‘When do executives render account compared to the moment of decision-making?’. Of the

three, the first was the most relevant in the cases included in this study. The case studies showed that the proactive rendering of account was generally more effective in terms of regaining authority (see also K. P. Kearns, 1996).

Current conceptual frameworks lack the ability to capture the influence of timing on the effectiveness of the rendering of account because they do not consider the question of timing (compare Mulgan, 2003, pp. 22-30; Mashaw, 2006, p. 118; Bovens, 2007). They are unable to fully grasp the potential of the rendering of account as a 'proactive response'. Therefore, the understanding of accountability practices could be improved if a timing dimension is added to existing conceptual frameworks for analysing public accountability: when do accountors render account?

E) The understanding of public accountability practices could be improved by extending existing conceptual frameworks for analysing public accountability with a substantive dimension and a timing dimension: with what arguments and when do accountors render account?

In addition to having identified the two foregoing opportunities for extending conceptual frameworks for analysing public accountability, this study has identified three areas of special attention that are as yet underexposed in the literature on public accountability. These will be discussed separately in the next section.

12.2.3 Areas of special attention: strategies, demands, and informal accountability

Accountors' strategies

The analysis provided in Chapter 11 claims that developing a full understanding of actual practice of accountability, which has received little attention as yet (Brandsma & Schillemans, forthcoming 2013), requires studying the conduct of accountors as well as their motivations. Local executives render account in different ways and thereby influence how accountability operates in practice. Political-executives, for example, played an important role in establishing the direct accountability relationship between the municipal boards and neighbourhood residents. Exemplarily, Rotterdam executives literally took accountability to the street. The case studies showed that the accountability strategies of local political-executives differed considerably; they chose particular foci over others. In 's-Hertogenbosch (round 3), alderman Weterings, for example, opted for an almost exclusively procedural rendering of account.

The effectiveness of such strategies has not yet been systematically reviewed from the perspective of the accountor. The 'Machiavellian perspective' is somewhat missing

from contemporary analyses of the practice of accountability. It is important to recognise that accountors' motives for rendering account substantially differ from those of accountees. The preceding chapters suggest that local executives have an interest in regaining authority through the rendering of account. They call for research into accountors' influence on the practice of public accountability.

As has already been mentioned, this perspective has been introduced into accountability studies as a way of evaluating the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms only recently. Traditionally, accountability mechanisms have been evaluated from the perspective of accountees because it was held that accountability 'works' when accountees can effectively hold accountors to account (see e.g., Bovens *et al.*, 2008; Dowdle, 2006b). As a consequence, the accountor's perspective has remained underexposed; their accountability strategies have not yet been systematically compared. Therefore, a focus on the role of accountors in shaping the practice of accountability is advocated here. Again the aim is not to replace existing conceptions, but rather to extend the view in order to improve the understanding of the actual practice of accountability.

It could be suggested that such an approach to accountability is at odds with 'the core sense' of accountability since the latter starts from the perspective of the accountee. However, the current study's conception of accountability upholds the core sense of accountability since it assigns a crucial role to the obligation to render account (see Chapter 2). At the same time it draws special attention to the role of the accountor in shaping the practice of accountability.

Thus, whilst upholding the 'core sense of accountability', that is, being called to account (Mulgan, 2000, p. 555), accountability studies should pay considerable attention to the role accountors, *in casu* local political-executives, play in shaping accountability mechanisms and the practice of accountability. They should recognise that accountors do not necessarily have an aversion to their own accountability (compare Van Gunsteren, 1999, p. 17; Newell & Wheeler, 2006). By contrast, the executives included in this study demonstrated a (sometimes reticent) willingness to render account, *verantwoordingsbereidheid*. More importantly, they preferred particular ways of rendering account over others.

Meeting accountability demands

The role of accountees in accountability practices, though, still deserves considerable attention. This study started from the presumption that effective account rendering requires congruence between accountees' expectations, that is, accountees' demands placed on accountors, and the actual rendering of account by accountors, that is, accountors' supply. It has mapped the accountability demands of accountees and has compared those to the way in which local executives rendered account. The account-

tees' accountability demands were mapped along the lines of six dimensions: 'Who?', 'To whom?', 'For what?', 'With what arguments?', 'How?', and 'When?'.

Although accountees' demands have received considerable attention in the accountability literature (e.g., Mulgan, 2003, p. 202), they have often been conceptualised as expectations with regard to the conduct of accountors that is under scrutiny, rather than expectations with regards to the way in which accountors render account. 'Accountability expectations' are generally conceived of as evaluative standards for leaders' actions, for example, 'accountability for performance' or 'process accountability' (e.g., Radin & Romzek, 1996; Behn, 2001), rather than as evaluative standards for how leaders render account. Accountability demands have remained underexposed, or rather, have not been broken down thoroughly along the different dimensions of accountability. 'Accountability expectations' have mostly been identified for the 'For what?' dimension of accountability, not the 'Who?', 'To whom?', 'With what arguments?', 'When?', and especially the 'How?' dimensions (see also Jos & Tompkins, 2004). The latter dimensions of accountees' accountability demands are as yet under-explored. In the literature that was studied for this thesis, systematic empirical analyses of the differences in the accountability demands of different accountees along these six dimensions of accountability were rare.

The current study set out to provide such an analysis for the cases under consideration. It was established, amongst others, that the accountability demands of various accountees differed substantially. Whereas the procedural rendering of account generally satisfied councillors, neighbourhood residents mostly demanded a substantive account of why a particular location was chosen. Furthermore, the accountability demands of individual accountees also differed substantially within groups of accountees. Most, but not all neighbourhood residents, for example, expected local executives to explicitly render account. Of the former, some only expected local executives to explain the reasonableness of the location decision as such, but most expected executives to cover siting, selection, and process. Likewise, some councillors attached considerable value to a substantive account (e.g., Informant 62), whereas others did not (e.g., Informant 64).

It proved that honouring the diversity of accountability demands was crucial for local executives in regaining authority. In 's-Hertogenbosch (rounds 1 & 2), for example, alderman Eugster did not honour the demand to render account to neighbourhood residents directly immediately after the location decision, which had a negative effect on her perceived authority. Similarly, her successor, alderman Weterings was criticised by some for not rendering account for his location decisions in substantive terms. His authority, however, mostly remained intact because a pivotal group of councillors and neighbourhood residents was satisfied with the mostly procedural account that he provided. The Ghent local executives provided a convincing account of why Nieuwland

was the best location for the night shelter, but failed to address the accountability demands of the Turkish community.

To summarise, accountees' accountability demands have to be taken into account, not only by accountors but also by scholars studying accountability practices.

- F) Accountability studies should pay special attention to the role accountors play in shaping the accountability arrangements in which they operate rather than to the role of accountees alone, and also to the expectations held by accountees and the evaluative standards they apply in judging the adequacy of the way in which account is rendered.

Informal accountability mechanisms

The case studies included in this thesis showed that for the effective rendering of account the direct, informal accountability mechanisms between political-executives on the one hand and councillors and neighbourhood residents on the other were very important. Although all accountability relationships included in this study can be considered to be public accountability mechanisms, the actual practice of calling to account and the rendering of account often took place behind closed doors.

Particularly the accountability relationship between local executives and individual councillors was of a highly informal nature. The 'real' holding to account and rendering of account did not take place in formal council meetings, but in informal meetings in the corridors of city hall, in informal meetings between executives and their political parties' councillors, and over the telephone.

Also, the influence of party political accountability mechanisms should not be underestimated. These proved influential in almost all cases, most evidently 's-Hertogenbosch (rounds 1 & 2). Executives and councillors from all cases emphasised the importance of such informal accountability mechanisms. These functioned as selection mechanisms for those issues that allegedly required the added political weight of publicity. *Public* accountability often functioned as a sanction in itself, rather than as a neutral platform for holding to account and rendering account. These practices were considerably influenced by political-strategic considerations, or 'the politics of accountability', that is, the political-strategic dimension of accountability practices. In the board-citizens accountability relationship, too, the private rendering of account proved very influential. A substantial part of local executives' accountability activities that proved crucial for regaining authority took place in private meetings that supplemented public meetings.

These findings suggest that studies into the practice of accountability could benefit from studying informal, concealed accountability practices since scholars tend to focus on the formal aspects of accountability relationships (Brandsma & Schillemans, forthcoming 2013). As regards public accountability in the case of controversial decision-making, there is certainly more than meets the public eye.

G) Accountability studies should pay special attention to informal, concealed accountability practices.

12.2.4 Main implications for public accountability theory

To sum up, the current study advocates a conception of accountability that perceives accountability practices as praxes of communicative interaction, which are shaped by interaction between accountees' accountability demands and the actual rendering of account by accountors. It proposes two additions to the existing conceptual frameworks for analysing accountability: a substantive dimension that characterises the types of explanations and justifications that are used in the rendering of account, and a timing dimension that captures at least three timing aspects of the rendering of account. It also draws special attention to accountors' accountability strategies, accountees' accountability demands, and informal accountability mechanisms.

12.3 Implications for practice

From the case studies, several practical dos and don'ts can be derived for managing human service facility decision-making processes. For example, it may not be wise to initiate such processes before forthcoming municipal elections. Similarly, it seems wise to make the final location decision public through local government rather than through care agencies since accountees hold that this is the government's responsibility. Also, obtaining and maintaining the full commitment of the Municipal Council throughout the decision-making process proved crucial. However, such a list of practical recommendations is not provided here.

The reason is twofold. First, elaborate, well-informed guidelines on how to organise controversial location decision-making processes are already available (e.g., Wynne-Edwards, 2003; Ministry of Housing Spatial Planning and the Environment, 2007). The problem is not so much that such practical knowledge is not available. Rather, Informants suggest (e.g., 65, expert), lessons that have been learned in the past, at least in the Netherlands, do not always find their way into the day-to-day practice of location decision-making. Second, such blueprints for controversial decision-making

processes generally do not sufficiently recognise the contextually dependent nature of the highly complex location decision-making processes. Although there are some general lessons to be learned, the success of concrete measures is highly contextually dependent (see also Schively, 2007). The successful approach alderman Weterings took in round 3 in 's-Hertogenbosch, for example, would quite likely have failed in round 2 because of the lack of a similar window of opportunity.

What is done here alternatively, is to introduce the perspective of accountability to the field of controversial location decision-making processes, which as yet is under-exposed. This may deepen local political-executives' understanding of the context in which they operate when making controversial location decisions.

12.3.1 Stepping into the line of fire

The case studies indicated that the rendering of account is not a panacea for overcoming political and social opposition to controversial decisions and directive decision-making in the field of human service facility siting. The analysis showed that making controversial location decisions in a directive way in a consensus context required political-executives had great sensitivity to the socio-political context in which they operated. Directive leadership *can* effectively be reconciled with consensus democracy, and the rendering of account *can* perform a bridging function between the calls for increased responsiveness and for directive leadership, as a mechanism through which political-executives regain authority. But, the viability of such an approach very much depends on political-executives' abilities to make it work. Regaining authority for controversial location decisions in a consensus strongly appealed to local leaders' situational intelligence and their socio-political skills and competences in negotiating different demands and interests.

One of the main prerequisites for regaining authority through the rendering of account is that political-executives recognise that location decisions are essentially political (Holton *et al.*, 1973; Dear, 1974; Karsten, 2010), and that, therefore, locational conflict about human service facility siting is inherently political as well (see also Terpstra, 2002). Moreover, the relationship between political-executives and neighbourhood residents is essentially political. This is what makes accountability so important.

The political-executives included in this study tended to ignore this point under the pretence that neighbourhood residents simply wanted to get rid of the intended facility or that citizens were solely motivated by self-interest. They often used the NIMBY label as a justification for putting neighbourhood residents' normative, evaluative questions aside. The point is, however, that even if neighbourhood residents are NIMBYs and even if they are solely motivated by self-interest, location decisions remain essentially political. Location decisions remain controversial political decisions that say 'yes' to some, but 'no' to others. When neighbourhood residents demand a more

thorough explanation and justification of the location decisions in terms of how their interests have been weighed against others', this is a normative and political process in itself (for a normative perspective on this issue, see Hermansson, 2007). In order to be effective in terms of regaining authority, the account provided should, therefore, recognise these demands, acknowledge them, and honour the accountability demands of different accountees. Such an approach to the board-citizens relationship recognises citizens in their role as members of the sovereign *demos*; it can be effective in regaining authority because of the clarity it offers in terms of responsibility and accountability.

Of course, this does not mean that political-executives have to gain public support for their location decisions or that neighbourhood residents should become the final decision-makers. Nor does it mean that the rendering of account in technical rather than ideological terms cannot be effective. Nevertheless, it does mean that even the application of technical criteria is essentially political and that political-executives, if they want to regain authority for their directive location decisions, have to respond to councillors and citizens' evaluative questions with regard to this in normative terms, making their considerations explicit. This will not necessarily generate public acceptance of the location decisions since neighbourhood residents and councillors might still disagree with the considerations and oppose the decisions. But, such an approach increases the chance that accountees will come to view the location decisions as reasonable and that consequently political-executives will regain authority.

Yet, although this thesis finds that 'accountable leadership' can be effective in regaining authority for controversial location decisions, it does not claim that there is one effective accountable leadership style that is suitable for all seasons. Rather, political-executive leaders have to be well aware of the accountability demands of their accountees and of how these develop over the course of time. In rendering account, political-executives will also have to respect existing accountability mechanisms and arrangements.

At the same time political-executives are not simply at the mercy of the institutions and of the politics of accountability. Individual leaders can make a difference through developing effective accountability strategies and, through that, counter social and political challenges to their authority that stem from their directive location decisions. If they manage to develop effective accountability strategies, they can regain authority for their directive location decisions. The effective rendering of account may enable them, to cite one Informant, "to do what cannot be done": making directive location decisions in a consensus context and regaining authority for them.

To conclude, the feasibility of directive leadership in a consensus context in terms of regaining authority depends on local political leaders' willingness to portray 'accountable leadership', that is, their preparedness to position themselves as being politically responsible and accountable for their controversial location decisions. They will have

to put themselves in the line of fire in a complex and ill-disposed environment. But this is not enough. The viability of this approach hinges on local political-executives' skills to make accountable leadership work.

- H) Political-executives can regain authority for directive decisions in a consensus context, but the feasibility thereof hinges on local political-executives' skills and willingness to make accountable leadership work.

While upholding the legal principle of collegiality, such individualised accountability constitutes a break away from the collegial and collective traditions that are characteristic for consensus democracies. Regaining authority for directive decisions in a consensus context, though, requires political-executives resist the tendency to hide behind collectivism and collegiality and step to the fore as accountable political leaders.

Summary

When local political-executives make decisions on where to locate human service facilities, their authority is readily challenged. Citizens, residents' associations, business owners, and councillors often challenge the reasonableness of the location decisions made by mayors or aldermen, especially when made directive, that is, in a non-participative way. It is difficult for local political-executives to regain authority for these kinds of decisions, especially in a consensus context. This thesis postulated that local political-executives can regain authority for directive location decisions by rendering account, that is, by explaining and justifying to different audiences the considerations that motivated their decisions. The research question was: how does the rendering of account influence local political-executive leaders' authority in the case of directive decisions in a consensus context?

The aim was to further understanding of the as yet little understood practice of public accountability by analysing from a leader-centric perspective the communicative interaction between political-executive leaders and councillors and citizens. The study constituted a plausibility probe for the practical reconcilability of the theoretically incongruent ideas of directive leadership and consensus democracy.

Findings were obtained through a comparative case study of six cases of directive decision-making in the field of human service facility siting from the Netherlands and Flanders. For each case the accountability strategies of local political-executives were analysed using six dimensions: 'Who rendered account?', 'To whom did the accountant render account?', 'For what did the accountant render account?', 'With what arguments did the accountant render account?', 'How did the accountant render account?', and 'When did the accountant render account?'. The accountability strategies of local political-executives displayed considerable diversity in each of the six dimensions, as did the effectiveness thereof in terms of regaining authority.

In Rotterdam, it was found that political-executives regained a considerable amount of authority through rendering account for their directive location decisions, by using mainly technical and situational arguments, and by convincing accountees of the reasonableness of distributing human service facilities across the city on the basis of a fair share principle. The effectiveness of their accountability strategies was substantially improved by rendering account directly and extensively to neighbourhood residents. District executives as well as the responsible alderman took accountability to the streets, which increased their abilities to effectively explain and justify their location decisions.

In The Hague, the responsible alderman regained a considerable amount of authority through rendering account informally and both directly and indirectly to neighbourhood residents, in addition to rendering account to the Municipal Council through

formal mechanisms. He explicitly explained to accountees why the location decisions were made as they were. Furthermore, by taking a strongly monistic approach to the decision-making the alderman displayed valuable sensitivity to the socio-political context in which he operated.

In 's-Hertogenbosch, rounds 1 and 2, by contrast, the responsible alderman failed to regain authority for her highly controversial location decisions. Her strong personal dedication backfired and she was effectively forced to withdraw her location decisions, the reasonableness of which continued to be strongly challenged by both social and political actors. Her accountability strategy was reactive in nature and mainly rested on formal, representative accountability mechanisms, which hampered her abilities to generate understanding for her location decisions among councillors and neighbourhood residents.

In round 3, the 's-Hertogenbosch' alderman's successor regained a substantial level of authority by rendering account for his location decisions informally and directly to both neighbourhood residents and councillors. The effectiveness of his accountability strategy can be explained by the fact that he rendered account proactively, mainly in procedural terms, in a way that honoured the accountability demands of his accountees.

In relation to the opposition to a drug treatment centre in Antwerp, political-executives mainly relied on adequately responding to citizens' concerns and complaints rather than on rendering account. Still, they regained authority by explaining the reasonableness of their decision to relocate the facility in terms of the fact that the chosen area housed a considerable number of the facility's clientele.

In Ghent, the municipality's political-executives managed to regain a substantial amount of authority for their location decision for a night shelter by producing an account of their motivations that was particularly convincing to neighbourhood residents. By explicitly rendering account for their motivations, the aldermen managed to convince neighbourhood residents that they had chosen the best available location, which, in turn, contributed to their abilities to overcome social opposition.

Overall, the findings indicate that rendering account can affect accountees' perceptions of the reasonableness of controversial decisions made in an authoritative manner by political-executive leaders. Through explaining and justifying their decisions, accountors generally created understanding for their decisions among accountees, which positively influenced their authority.

Success, however, was not self-evident; not all political-executives were equally effective in countering the challenge to their authority that stemmed from their directive location decisions through rendering account. Regaining authority through explaining and justifying decisions required developing convincing accounts that meshed

with accountees' values and belief systems, and that honoured the accountability demands of accountees, which were contextually dependent.

The comparative analysis showed that the effectiveness of political-executives' accountability strategies generally increased when they utilised the potential of the accountability mechanisms that formed alternatives for those of the traditional regime of the representative democracy, when they recognised the importance of the direct board-citizens accountability relationship, and when they rendered account proactively. Still, regaining authority required political-executives had a great deal of sensitivity to the socio-political context in which they operated.

This thesis' main findings are as follows:

- A) There is a strategic element to accountability. Political-executives can regain a considerable amount of authority for directive decisions in a consensus context.
- B) The effective rendering of account furthers public understanding for decisions in terms of perceptions of reasonableness, which means a considerable amount of authority can be regained, but the rendering of account does not necessarily increase social and political support to the same extent.
- C) The effectiveness of accountability strategies in terms of regaining authority depends on the extent to which the account provided meshes with different accountees' values and belief systems and the extent to which the accountant honours accountees' accountability demands.
- D) Although the effectiveness of accountability strategies is context dependent individualised, direct, proactive, and informal rendering of account to both social and political actors were generally important aspects of effective accountability strategies in terms of regaining authority.

These findings indicate that directive decision-making in the form of Decide-Announce-Defend can be a viable approach to controversial decision-making in a consensus context. At the same time, directive leadership in a consensus democracy proves to be effective only when it respects the checks and balances posed on it by its consensus-oriented socio-political context. The comparative analysis also shows that regaining authority for directive leadership requires a variant of 'accountable leadership' that honours accountees' accountability demands, at least as regards controversial location decision-making processes in a consensus context.

The study proves the analytic value of perceiving 'accountability' as a practice of communicative interaction, complementary to perceiving it as an institutional

framework like most accountability studies do. Furthermore, it shows that existing conceptual frameworks for analysing public accountability can be extended with a substantive dimension and a timing dimension: with what arguments and when do accountors render account? Also, the study draws attention to the role accountors play in shaping the accountability arrangements in which they operate rather than to the role of accountees alone, and to the expectations held by accountees and the evaluative standards they apply in judging the adequacy of the way in which account is rendered. In addition, it emphasises the significance of informal, concealed accountability practices.

This study calls upon local political leaders' willingness to position themselves as 'accountable leaders' and their abilities to make accountable leadership work, because regaining authority for directive decisions in a consensus context requires political-executives resist the tendency to hide behind collectivism and collegiality and step to the fore.

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Appendix A - List of Informants

Name	Surname	Occupation at the time of the interview	City
Alphen, van	Bert	Former alderman <i>Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Emancipatie</i>	The Hague
Bartels	Melanie	District councillor (Groenlinks), Delfshaven district, chair of the District Council Committee <i>Bestuur, Sociaal & Veilig</i>	Rotterdam
Boomsma	Evert	Senior policy advisor, <i>Maatschappelijke Zorg & Volksgezondheid</i> , Municipality of The Hague	The Hague
Braeckeveldt*	Lien	Councillor, Sp.a	Ghent
Bruijine, de	Annita	Managing director, Segbroek district	The Hague
Çiçek	Serdar	District councillor (PvdA), Feijenoord district, Deputy District Council chair, chair of the Social Affairs District Council Committee	Rotterdam
Coenders	Marly	Senior advisor, <i>Bestuursdienst</i> , Municipality of Rotterdam	Rotterdam
De Coninck	Monica	Alderman <i>Sociale zaken, diversiteit en loketten</i>	Antwerp
De Troyer	Pierre	Neighbourhood resident, spokesman vzw <i>Slachthuis en omgeving</i>	Antwerp
Decruynaere	Elke	Councillor, Chair of the Groen! party group	Ghent
Denis*	Omer	Councillor (Vlaams Belang)	Ghent
Depla	Paul	Alderman <i>Ruimte & Bouwen, Sport, Werk & Inkomen, Financiën, Voorzitter Wethoudersvereniging</i>	Nijmegen
Dijk, van	Ton	Director, Department of Public Health, Municipality of The Hague	The Hague
Dukel	Fred	Sectoral manager, <i>Belastingzaken</i> , Municipality of The Hague, former managing director, Escamp district	The Hague
Duran	Thijs	Neighbourhood resident, member <i>Commissie III Wijkberaad Leyenburg</i> , member <i>Klankbordgroep Marechaussee kazerne</i>	The Hague
Ende, van den	Peter	Senior policy advisor, <i>Afdeling Maatschappelijke Zorg & Volksgezondheid</i> , Municipality of The Hague	The Hague
Eugster	Jetty	Former alderman <i>Participatie en Zorg</i>	's-Hertogenbosch
Flore	Fabian	Former neighbourhood resident, Antwerpen-North	Antwerp
Franssen	Theo	Neighbourhood resident, Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham	Ghent
Gielen	Koen	Neighbourhood resident, Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham	Ghent
Gök	Saban	Councillor (Sp.a)	Ghent
Gonçalves	Carlos	District chair, Delfshaven District Government	Rotterdam
Groen	Maaïke	Project manager, <i>Fysieke Infrastructuur, Dienst Stedenbouw en Volkshuisvesting</i> , Municipality of Rotterdam	Rotterdam
Ham, van der	Jetze	Senior advisor, Delfshaven District Government	Rotterdam
Haud'Huyze	Katrien	Manager, Department of Facility Management, Municipality of Ghent	Ghent
Herck, Van	Wim	Neighbourhood resident, former spokesman <i>Noord Zegt Nee</i>	Antwerp
Hoek, van der	Co	Senior advisor, LIMOR	The Hague
Houte, van	Daphne	Councillor, Chair of the <i>Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning, Volksgezondheid en Participatie</i> Council Committee	Rotterdam

Name	Surname	Occupation at the time of the interview	City
Jong, de	Ank	Neighbourhood resident, board member <i>Wijkberaad Leyenburg</i>	The Hague
Kagie	Paul	Councillor, Chair of the Leefbaar 's-Hertogenbosch & Rosmalen party group, Chair of the Social Developments Council Committee	's-Hertogenbosch
Kint	Dirk	Coordinator, <i>Stedelijk wijkoverleg Antwerpen-Noord</i> , Municipality of Antwerp	Antwerp
Kriens	Jantine	Alderman, <i>Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Maatschappelijke Opvang</i>	Rotterdam
Lith, van	Robèrt	Journalist, <i>Stadsredactie 's-Hertogenbosch, Brabants Dagblad</i>	's-Hertogenbosch
Maagdenberg, van den	Vera	Researcher, <i>Centrum voor Onderzoek en Statistiek</i> , Municipality of Rotterdam	Rotterdam
Maegh	Christine	Social relief policy advisor, <i>OCMW Antwerp</i>	Antwerp
Meeuws	Tom	Sectoral manager, <i>Dienst Samenleven</i> , Municipality of Antwerp	Antwerp
Moorman	Marieke	Alderman <i>Milieu, Maatschappelijke Opvang, Jongeren & Jeugdparticipatie</i>	Tilburg
Mortier	Marijke	Neighbourhood resident <i>Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham</i> , member <i>Wijk in de Kijker</i>	Ghent
Noreilde*	Stefaan	Councillor (Open VLD)	Ghent
Ommeren, van	Hermie	Councillor, Chair of the PvdA party group	's-Hertogenbosch
Oudshoorn	Dagmar	District chair, Feijenoord District Government	Rotterdam
Penninga	Kitty	Senior interim- and project manager, <i>Penninga Management</i>	Utrecht
Philippeth	Koen	Policy advisor, Cabinet Guy Reynebeau, former Cabinet Tom Balthazar, Municipality of Ghent	Ghent
Reijnen	Anne-marie	Researcher, <i>Centrum voor Onderzoek en Statistiek</i> , Municipality of Rotterdam	Rotterdam
Renard	Johan	Senior advisor, Cabinet Monica De Coninck, Municipality of Antwerp	Antwerp
Ruyters	Tino	General manager, <i>vzw Free Clinic</i>	Antwerp
Schalkers	Annette	Neighbourhood resident, member <i>Beheercommissie Havenzicht</i>	Rotterdam
Scheelen	Magda	General manager, <i>CAW Sonar</i>	Hasselt
Schouten	Ruud	Councillor, Chair of the GroenLinks party group, member of the Social Developments Council committee	's-Hertogenbosch
Schuilig	Gerard	Chairman, Kralingen-Crooswijk District Government	Rotterdam
Seys	Patrick	General manager, <i>CAW Artevelde vzw</i>	Ghent
Smits	Wouter	All-round project manager <i>Sector Cultuur, Welzijn & Sociale Zaken</i> , project manager Hostels, Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch	's-Hertogenbosch
Steege, ter	Hugo	Project assistant <i>Hostels; CWS/Welzijn</i> , Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch	's-Hertogenbosch

Name	Surname	Occupation at the time of the interview	City
Straasheijm	Wim	Sectoral manager, <i>Juridische Dienst Servicedienst Rotterdam</i> , former project manager Social Relief, former District chair, Feijenoord District Government	Rotterdam
Tiesing	Harold	Neighbourhood resident South, spokesman <i>Stop Hostels Den Bosch</i>	's-Hertogenbosch
Van Dyck	Charles	Neighbourhood resident, Chair <i>Onafhankelijke Bewonersgroep, vzw De Bilzen Antwerpen Noord</i>	Antwerp
Vanhex	Marcel	General manager, CAD Limburg	Hasselt
Verhoeff	Marijke	Chair, <i>Bewonersvereniging Noordereiland</i> , member <i>Beheergroepen Noordereiland & Opvang Keileweg</i>	Rotterdam
Vermathen	Erik	General manager, <i>StadeAdvies</i> , chair public meetings 's-Hertogenbosch	Utrecht
Vidts	Christian	Administrative adjunct, Facility Management department, Municipality of Ghent	Ghent
Vliet, van	Martin	Neighbourhood resident, Kralingen-Crooswijk	Rotterdam
Vries, de	Marijke	Programme manager, Strategy Plan for Social Relief, GGD Rotterdam-Rijnmond	Rotterdam
Weterings	Rodney	Alderman <i>Volkshuisvesting/Stedelijke vernieuwing, Sport en Recreatie, Cultuur, Bestuurlijke vernieuwing</i>	's-Hertogenbosch
Wils	Ingrid	Social consultant, <i>Kinderdagverblijf 2 - Nieuwland - Departement Onderwijs en Opvoeding</i> , Municipality of Ghent	Ghent
Yilmaz	Fadime	Neighbourhood resident, Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham	Ghent
Zeilstra	Jelle	Senior communication advisor, <i>GGD Rotterdam Rijnmond</i>	Rotterdam
Anonymous	-	Neighbourhood resident	's-Hertogenbosch
Anonymous	-	Neighbourhood resident	's-Hertogenbosch
Anonymous	-	Neighbourhood resident, Delfshaven	Rotterdam
Anonymous	-	Neighbourhood resident, Prins Alexander	Rotterdam
Anonymous	-	Neighbourhood resident, spokesman	's-Hertogenbosch
Anonymous	-	Neighbourhood resident, member <i>Beheergroep Marechausseekazerne</i>	The Hague
Anonymous	-	Neighbourhood resident, member <i>Beheergroep Zuiderparkweg</i>	's-Hertogenbosch
Anonymous	-	Neighbourhood resident, member <i>Beheergroep Zuiderparkweg</i>	's-Hertogenbosch

*Brief interview by telephone.

Appendix B - Attended meetings

Date	Meeting	City
10-06-2008 (video)	Social Developments Council Committee meeting	The Hague
31-03-2009	Public meeting on social relief policies, <i>onderafdeling Centrum van de PvdA</i>	Rotterdam
12-01-2010	<i>Bestuur, Sociaal en Veilig</i> Council Committee meeting, Delfshaven District	Rotterdam
16-08-2010	Debate on social relief	The Hague
15-09-2010 (audiotape)	<i>Welzijn, OCMW, Noord-Zuid, Vredeshuis, volksgezondheid, milieu, REG, groendienst en jeugd</i> Council Committee meeting	Ghent
21-09-2010 (audiotape)	<i>Haven, innovatie, economische aangelegenheden, middenstand, werk, financiën en facility management</i> Council Committee meeting	Ghent
27-10-2010	Municipal Council meeting	Ghent
12-10-2010	Municipal Council meeting	's-Hertogenbosch
01-12-2010	Social Developments Council Committee meeting	's-Hertogenbosch
14-12-2010	Municipal Council meeting	's-Hertogenbosch
29-11-2010	<i>Wijkdebat</i> Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham	Ghent
30-03-2011	Management board meeting <i>Klankbordgroep Marechausseekazerne</i>	The Hague
26-04-2011	Public meeting <i>Hostel Van Broeckhovenlaan</i>	's-Hertogenbosch
18-05-2011	Management boards meeting <i>Zuiderparkweg & Van Broeckhovenlaan</i>	's-Hertogenbosch
07-09-2011	Management board meeting <i>Hostel Zuid</i>	's-Hertogenbosch
11-10-2011	Municipal Council meeting	's-Hertogenbosch
02-11-2011	Management board meeting <i>Hostel Zuid</i>	's-Hertogenbosch
09-11-2011	Farewell drink alderman Weterings	's-Hertogenbosch
11-07-2012	Management board meeting <i>Klankbordgroep Marechausseekazerne</i>	The Hague

Appendix C - List of people that assisted in the data collection

Name	Surname	Occupation at the time of the contact
Boer, de	Ruby	Project manager <i>Wijkaanpak Zuidwest</i> , Segbroek district, Municipality of The Hague
Bosma	Pieter	Policy advisor Public Safety, Kralingen-Crooswijk District Government
Bruyn, de	Marja	Board member, <i>Woonstad Rotterdam</i>
Buitenhek	Claudia	Council public information officer, government secrateriat, Municipality of The Hague
Burger	Piet	Staff member, <i>Centrum voor Onderzoek en Statistiek</i> , Municipality of Rotterdam
De Bie	Eva	Consulent, <i>OCMW Antwerp</i>
Ewijk, van	René	Manager, <i>Maatschappelijke Zorg en Volksgezondheid</i> , Municipality of The Hague
Knol	Wim Bart	Researcher, WBK Marktonderzoek
Meijer	George	Staff member, <i>Directie Publieke Gezondheid en Zorg</i> , Municipality of Rotterdam
Oord, van den	Marc	Senior staff member, <i>DIM</i> , Kralingen-Crooswijk District Government
Schauwaert	Martine	District government secrateriat staff member, Feijenoord District Government
Specker	Jona	Research Fellow, Scientific Council for Government Policy
Tanguy	Sylvie	Administrative staff member, <i>Dienst Voorlichting - Departement Strategie en Coördinatie</i> , Municipality of Ghent
Van Wayenberg	Luc	Administrative adjunct, <i>Dienst Bestuursondersteuning - Diensten van de Stadssecretaris</i> , Municipality of Ghent
Vanaken	Peter	Clerk, <i>OCMW Hasselt</i>
Vos-Ter Wolbeek	Jolanda	Communication advisor, <i>GGD Rotterdam-Rijnmond</i>
Wendy De Man	Wendy	Administrative adjunct, <i>Programma Stedelijke Vernieuwing en Gebiedsgerichte Werking, Departement Stafdiensten</i> , Municipality of Ghent
Zuure	Jasper	Research Fellow, Scientific Council for Government Policy

Appendix D - Results quick scan social opposition Rotterdam

District (task in # facilities)	Location	Level of initial opposition (as of 15-04-2009)	Representative source
<i>Charlois (1)</i>	Sliedrechtstraat ³⁵	Limited	None
<i>Delfshaven (1)</i>	Kapiteinsbuurt	Limited	(N. de Vries, 2007)
<i>Feijenoord (2)</i>	Putsebocht	Strong	("Bewoners dubben nog over opvang," 2007; see also PvdA Feijenoord, 2007)
	Sleephellingstraat	Substantial	(Unknown author, 2007)
<i>Hillegersberg-Schiebroek (1)</i>	Adriaen van der Doeslaan	Limited	("Bewoners dubben nog over opvang," 2007)
<i>Hoek van Holland (1)</i>	Prins Hendrikstraat	Limited	("Puzzelen met opvang daklozen," 2007)
<i>Hoogvliet (1)</i>	Stelle	Limited	None ³⁶
<i>Kralingen-Crooswijk (2)</i>	Bosland	Limited	None
	Plantagelaan	Strong	("De Esch schrikt van opvanghuis," 2009; "Stadhuis overhoop met deelgemeente," 2009)
	Willem Ruyslaan ³⁷	Strong	(Schreuder, 2006; see also "Kralingen wil Pauluskerk cliënten niet in Havenzicht," 2006)
<i>Noord (1)</i>	Mackaystraat	Limited	None
<i>Overschie (1)</i>	Delftweg ³⁸	Limited	None
<i>Prins Alexander (3)</i>	Wollefoppenweg	Strong	(De Hulster, 2007; Van Schie, 2007)
	Romanohof	Strong	(RTV Rijnmond, 2007)
	Eliotplaats	Limited	("Verbazing over opvang van ex-daklozen," 2007)
<i>Stadscentrum (1)</i>	N/A (was yet to be made)	N/A	N/A
<i>Wijkraad voor Pernis (1)</i>	Pastoriedijk, later Pastoriestraat	Substantial, later limited	("Pernis kijkt naar andere plek voor opvang van daklozen," 2007)
<i>IJsselmonde (3)</i>	Bovenstraat	Limited-substantial	(Boer, 2007)
	Aesopusplaats	Limited	None
	-no new location-	N/A	N/A

Appendix E - Interview topic list

Accountors

- How was the location decision made?
- What was your role in the decision-making?
- What considerations motivated the location decision?
- Which criteria were used for the location decision?
- To whom was the location decision communicated?
- Through which channels was the location decision communicated?
- What was the goal of the communication about the location decision?
- How did you explain the location decision?
- How would you characterise your relationships with the council/neighbourhood residents/the media?
- How have these relationships developed?
- What did this location decision mean for your position as a political-executive?
- What can be learned from your experiences?

Accountees

- When was the first time you became aware of the location decision?
- How did you become aware of the location decision?
- What did you think of the location decision?
- Were you involved in the location decision-making?
 - o What was your role in the decision-making?
- In your perception, what considerations motivated the location decision?
- What do you think of those considerations?
- Through which channels did you communicate with the political-executive(s), if at all?
 - o What was the goal of this communication with the political-executive(s)?
- How did the political-executive(s) explain the location decision to you, if at all?
- How would you characterise the political-executive(s) conduct as regards the location decision?
- How would you characterise your relationship with the political-executive(s)?
- How has this relationship developed?
- What do you expect from a political-executive with regard to communication about location decisions like these?
- What do you think of the location decision now?
- What can be learned from your experiences?

Appendix F - Socio-economic data on neighbourhoods

Rotterdam

Location	Neighbourhood	# Inhabitants (2012)	Spendable income per household (2009)	% Social security recipients* (2012)	% Unemployment (2012)	% Non-Dutch citizens (2012)
<i>Kapiteinsbuurt</i>	Delfshaven	6.596	23.600	9,61	9,23	63,52
<i>Putsebocht</i>	Bloemhof	13.950	24.400	9,54	8,22	75,13
<i>Sleephellingsstraat</i>	Noordereiland	3.293	28.900	6,68	5,07	42,94
<i>Plantagelaan</i>	De Esch	4.427	27.800	6,37	4,90	47,17
<i>Willem Ruyslaan</i>	Kralingen-West	15.590	27.600	6,75	5,18	54,65
<i>Wollefoppenweg</i>	Nesselande	11.582	46.000	0,85	2,00	26,86
Rotterdam	-	616.456	29.500	5,51	5,87	48,34

Source: <http://rotterdam.buurtmonitor.nl/>, own calculation

The Hague

Location	Neighbourhood	# Inhabitants (2012)	Spendable income per household (2006)	% Social s ecurity recipients* (2006)	% Unemployment (2006)	% Non-Dutch inhabitants (2012)
<i>Duinstraat</i>	Oud Scheveningen	2.851	25.200	2,93	4,27	20,80
<i>Leyweg</i>	Leyenburg	14.621	25.900	1,46	3,22	31,40
<i>Om en Bij</i>	Schildersbuurt- Noord	10.373	21.100	13,73	13,08	87,50
<i>Van Limburg Stirumstraat</i>	Huygenspark	5.803	21.500	8,92	9,09	67,50
<i>Vinkensteynstraat</i>	Valkenbosch- kwartier	11.390	25.600	3,96	5,94	55,00
<i>Zichtenburglaan</i>	Kerketuinen/ Zichtenburg	58	40.100	4,26	***	44,80
The Hague	-	502.735	28.700	4,70	6,04	50,40

Source: <http://www.denhaag.buurtmonitor.nl/>, own calculation

's-Hertogenbosch

Location	Neighbourhood	# Inhabitants (2012)	Spendable income per household (2005)	% Social security recipients** (2012)	% Unemployment (2012)	% Non- Dutch inhabitants (2012)
Geert Grootestraat Zuiderparkweg	Bazeldonk	1.493	22.900	5,16	4,35	23,31
Van Broeckhovenlaan	Graafsebuurt Noord	1.936	29.900	2,38	2,67	17,30
Henri Bayensstraat	Hintham Zuid	3.893	28.000	1,77	3,45	17,31
Churchillaan	De Kruiskamp	7.633	26.900	2,35	3,36	36,81
's-Hertogenbosch	-	141.906	29.998	2,04	2,97	19,58

Source: <http://www.s-hertogenbosch.buurtmonitor.nl/>, own calculation**Antwerp**

Location	Neighbourhood	# Inhabitants (2012)	Median net taxable income per person (2009)	% Social security recipients labour force (2011)	% Unemployment (2012)	% Foreigners (2012)
Van Arteveldestraat	Amandus- Atheneum	20.261	11.267	7,8	15,6	44,4
Schijnpoortweg	Stuivenberg	19.423	8.639	6,8	17,0	36,9
	Dam ³⁹	4.489	10.295	5,8	16,8	28,4
Antwerp	-	506.225	14.350	2,3	9,8	19,5

Source: <http://www.antwerpen.buurtmonitor.be/>**Ghent**

Location	Neighbourhood	# Inhabitants (2011)	Median net taxable income per declaration (2009)	# Social security recipients per 1000 inhabitants (2010)	% Unemployment (2011)	% Ethnic-cultural minority (2011)
Nieuwland	Sluizeken - Tolhuis - Ham	10.901	15.335	51	8,55	44,1
Ghent	-	247.262	20.693	24	5,16	18,80

Source: <http://www.gent.buurtmonitor.be/>

*WWB, **WWB, WIJ, ***Invalid data

Appendix G - Endnotes

- 1 'Leadership' is used here as a descriptive term that refers to the act of making political decisions.
- 2 Throughout this thesis 'public leadership', 'political leadership', and 'political-executive leadership' are used as synonyms. Each time these refer to the leadership of local political-executives.
- 3 Admittedly, there are also developments that lead in the opposite direction (see Genieys, Ballart & Valarié, 2004; Greasley & Stoker, 2008).
- 4 In a strictly mimetical conception of political representation, in which the appropriateness of a decision is judged by its degree of responsiveness, there is little room for strong political leadership because it expects a political leader to mimic 'the' public opinion as much as possible (Ankersmit, 1996, p. 21ff). By contrast, in an aesthetic conception of political representation democratic leadership entails that political leaders are justified to sometimes make decisions based on their own considerations that are at odds with the public opinion, but that are in agreement with what is considered to be for the public good.
- 5 The use of the term 'follower' might suggest that there is actual 'following' going on, that citizens follow their political-executives in the sense of a leader-follower relationship. As regards the cases included in this study, though, citizens are mainly onlookers, or subjects of political decision-making, who make judgments about the reasonableness of the location decisions (Keane, 2009).
- 6 Synonyms excluded.
- 7 Easton calls this 'covert support', but to avoid confusion I prefer not to use the term 'support'.
- 8 The alleged difference between 'procedural fairness' and 'procedural justice' will not be discussed in this thesis. For a discussion, see Van den Bos (2005).
- 9 This pattern deviates from the result of the European Value Studies for other Western European countries, where there is only a minor increase in the call for leadership, or even a decrease (see EVS results for item Q66A). As of yet, longitudinal data are not yet available though, which makes a direct comparison unfeasible.

"Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections"

	1999	2008		1999	2008
<i>Belgium</i>	31,6%	39,7%	<i>Italy</i>	15,6%	15,9%
<i>Denmark</i>	13,9%	14,9%	<i>The Netherlands</i>	27,3%	39,9%
<i>Finland</i>	25,2%	14,7%	<i>Norway</i>	25,2%	17,7%
<i>France</i>	34,6%	27,0%	<i>Spain</i>	23,1%	20,6%
<i>Germany</i>	19,2%	17,6%	<i>Sweden</i>	21,2%	15,6%
<i>Great Britain</i>	25,8%	28,0%			

Data from EVS 1981-2008 Longitudinal Data File, added answer categories of 'very good' and 'fairly good'

- 10 In interviews conducted for this study, this number varied between 500 and as much as 1.000.
- 11 Two of the districts had a somewhat different institutional makeup. This, however, was not particularly relevant to the current study since these are not included as sub-cases.
- 12 In addition, Appendix C provides a list of people that assisted in the data collection.
- 13 Due to the limited availability of time for the interview, only the key findings were discussed with alderman Kriens.
- 14 Such as <http://www.stophostelsdenbosch.nl>, <http://www.hostelsdenbosch.nl>, <http://www.noordzegtnet.be> and <http://www.nesseweb.nl>.
- 15 In Dutch: 'De opvang verstopt'.
- 16 Two of which have a somewhat different institutional makeup. This is not particularly relevant to this thesis, though.
- 17 Nor will a timeline be provided because of the multitude of decision-making processes.

- 18 [Ik ben geen voorstander van de locatie, maar als het dan toch noodzakelijk is, dan moet het uiteindelijk maar in de Bloemhof]
- 19 Although the quote is taken somewhat out of context since it referred to the role of the management boards, I believe that it is applicable here.
- 20 Later, this deadline was extended to 01-07-2010 ('s-Hertogenbosch Board of Mayor and Aldermen, 2010c, p. 4).
- 21 Which was set because it was a requirement laid down by one of the main financiers, the *Univé-VGZ-IZA-Trias Zorgkantoor*.
- 22 As of 15 November 2011, Weterings became director of a scientific institute.
- 23 Acronym for *Medisch en Sociaal OpvangCentrum*.
- 24 Note that the municipal executive aimed at deconcentration of the detrimental effects around De Coninckplein, but preferred a concentration of the Free Clinic's activities in the Schijnpoortweg location.
- 25 Until 14 November 2004, the party was called 'Vlaams Blok'. The party changed its name and its programme in response to the earlier decision of the Court of Cassation, which had found Vlaams Blok to be in violation of the law against racism (Erk, 2005, p. 493).
- 26 Dirk Grootjans refused to participate in an interview, as did mayor Patrick Janssens.
- 27 Chair of the Sp.a political party group and member of the coalition, like all other parties but Vlaams Belang (20 seats) and the VU-ID (1 seat).
- 28 Such a construction may also have increased the quality of the decision since Lerner and Tetlock (1999, p. 258) found that "outcome accountability produced greater commitment to a prior course of action than did process accountability", which was in line with Simonson and Staw's (1992) hypothesis that "outcome accountability would heighten the need for self-justification, thereby increasing a desire to defend past decisions." Whereas "process accountability, by contrast, would (a) lead decision-makers to engage in more evenhanded evaluation of alternatives and (b) decrease the need for self-justification" (cited in Lerner & Tetlock, 1999, p. 258).
- 29 Taken from the Westerstraat sub-case from the Centrum District, which is not included in this study.
- 30 Since Flanders' culture is closer to the French than to the Dutch (Hofstede, 2001), Hofstede's data serve as a good indicator for the power distance between Flanders and the Netherlands.
- 31 See www.dakloosinrotterdam.nl/, www.denhaagonderdak.nl/, and www.s-hertogenbosch.nl/inwoner/zorg-en-welzijn/hostels
- 32 A distinction that could be added to the typology is the threefold distinction between rendering account of siting, selection and process. However, since the case studies show that the effectiveness of these strategies once again very much depends on accountees' accountability demands, I am not inclined to include it as an additional dimension. Rather, I consider choosing between rendering account for siting, selection or process, or a combination of the three as an important aspect of developing an account proactively or reactively. The same goes for the distinction between the types of arguments that are used. The effectiveness of the accountability strategy does not depend on the type of arguments that is used *sec*, but executives' abilities to produce convincing accounts of their location decisions, that is accounts that appeal to accountees' set of values.
- 33 This postulate is corroborated for most of the facilities included in this study, for Rotterdam see (Maagdenberg *et al.*, 2008), for The Hague (WBK Marktonderzoek, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c), and for Antwerp (Decorte & Janssen, 2011).
- 34 The Feijenoord case showed that it is possible to deviate from the policy frameworks but that this puts substantial pressure on a political-executive's authority.
- 35 Replacing an existing facility.
- 36 If no media reports were found that spoke of any form of social opposition, this was taken to be an indication of the absence thereof.
- 37 Not part of the Strategy Plan, but nevertheless included (see Chapter 5).
- 38 Expansion of an existing facility.
- 39 The Schijnpoortweg location is located in Stuivenberg, but the Dam community was also very much involved in the dossier.

Decide and Defend

Regaining authority for controversial decisions through rendering account

Mayors and aldermen frequently make controversial decisions, for instance when they locate disputed facilities for the homeless. Political-executives' authority is readily challenged, especially when they make such decisions through a Decide-Announce-Defend approach. A directive leadership style is antithetical to the nature of consensus democracies like the Netherlands and Belgium. The puzzle of how local political-executives can enforce controversial decisions in a consensus-oriented context and at the same time counter the challenges to their political authority is at the centre of this book. Six case studies present empirical evidence of how, in the face of these challenges, executives can regain authority through rendering account, that is, by explaining and justifying their decisions.

The study provides a novel understanding of accountability, emphasising the perspective of the accountor. It shows that political-executives, too, have a role in shaping the as yet little understood communicative practice of accountability, and argues that accountability is a means in the hands of political-executives as opposed to a burden placed on them. The findings call upon political leaders' willingness to position themselves as 'accountable leaders' and appeal to their skills and competences to make accountable leadership work.

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